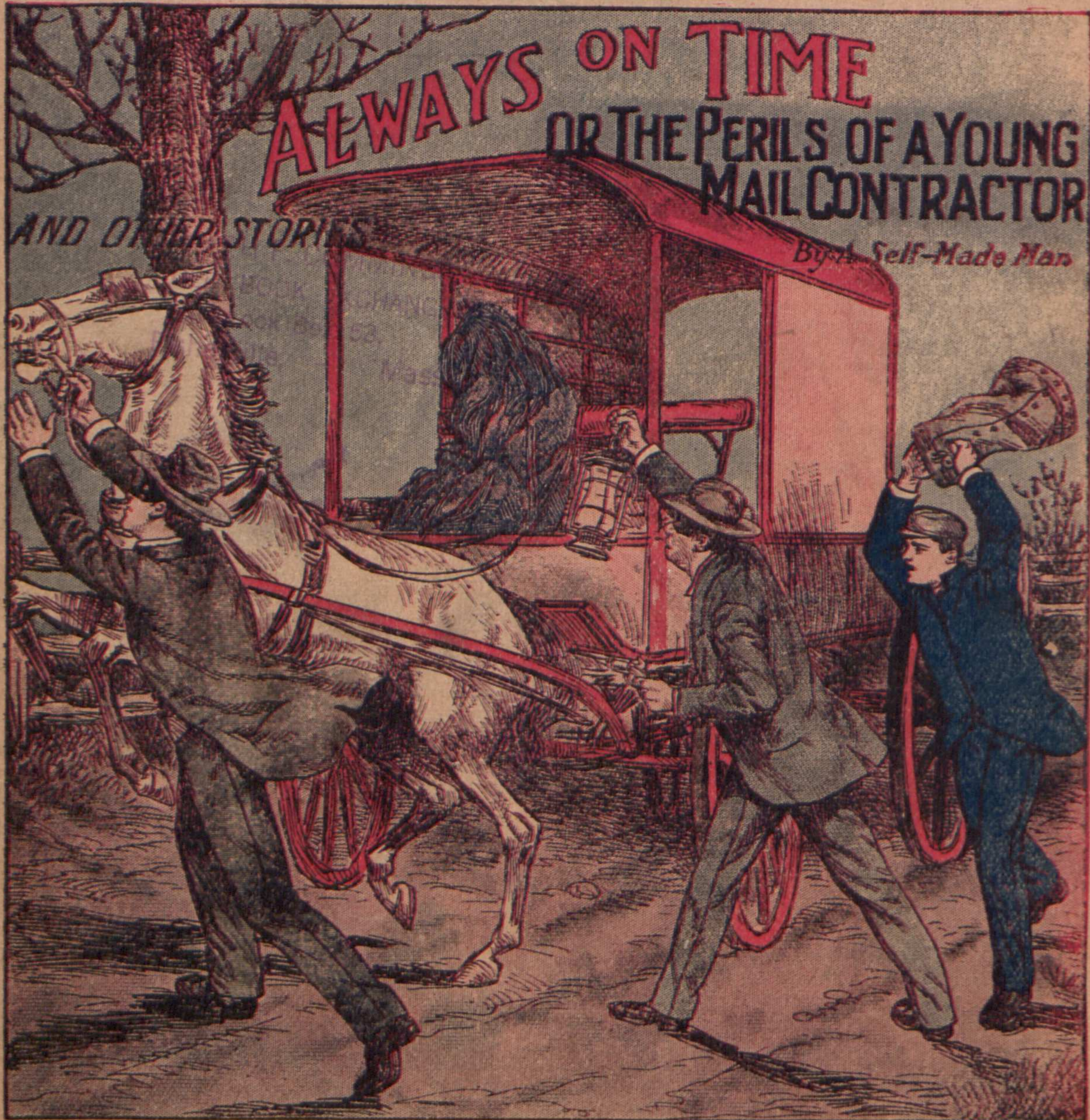


FAME & FORTUNE WEEKLY.

STORIES OF BOYS THAT MAKE MONEY.



The rascal in the lead seized the horse by the bridle, while his companion flashed the lantern at the dummy figure on the seat. Joe crept upon the latter. Swinging the mail bag aloft, he brought it down upon him.

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ALWAYS ON TIME

OR, THE PERILS OF A YOUNG MAIL CONTRACTOR

BY A SELF-MADE MAN

CHAPTER I.—Joe Gets the Mail Contract.

"I'm after that job," said Joe Fletcher.

"Not the mail route to Flushing!" cried Dick Spencer, in surprise.

"Yes. The contract is offered again to the lowest bidder."

"I see it is, by the notice in the post office. Jud Hopkins appears to be out of it. He's the third man who tackled the contract in three months. The route is too strenuous for the money that's in it. I'll bet you'll be the only bidder this time, so if you really mean business I'd ask a good figure. It's worth something for a fellow to risk his life. I'm surprised you should think of going for it."

"Well, a fellow can't hang around and live on his father, especially when his father isn't drawing a princely salary as cashier of the Clifton Bank, you know. My sister told me the other day it was time I brought in some money to the house."

"But you ought to be able to pick up a job in this town. Like myself, you're a graduate of the high school, and you stood above me in the class. I'm going to work on the first of the month to learn to be a surveyor. I don't see why you haven't been able to catch on to something good, too."

"Lawyer Howe offered to take me into his office, with the view of making a lawyer of me some day, but my taste doesn't run in that direction, and the wages, four dollars at first, was mighty small, so I turned it down, though my father was in favor of my taking it. In fact, we had a bit of a scrap over it last night, and we haven't spoken since, but that will wear off in a day or two."

"Four dollars isn't much, that's true; neither is the five that I'm going to work for; but I can afford to take it, for my mother says I can keep two of it for pocket money. I dare say she'll buy my clothes, too, for she doesn't really need the other three."

"Your father is in business for himself and makes more than my father."

"Your father would make a good deal more if he was cashier of a city bank. This is only a small town, and since the Clifton National Bank was started the bank your father works for is not doing so well as it was. At least so I've heard."

"That's right, but my father says it's picking up again. Being the oldest bank, and never hav-

ing been in any difficulty, the small tradespeople have confidence in it, and there's no danger of it going under."

"So you really mean to take the contract for carrying the mail to Flushing if you can get it?"

"I do."

"In spite of the fact that three men, who appeared anxious to get it, have quit after a short trial?"

"Yes. The first two claimed that several attempts were made to rob them along the route, and that they narrowly escaped after being shot at; but detectives have been investigating the road and they found nothing to substantiate the men's stories. It's my opinion there wasn't enough in it for them, and they forfeited their bonds rather than continue."

"Well, if you're determined to try your luck at it you'll have to get your bid in before somebody else takes a notion to apply, though, as I said before, I don't believe there'll be any rush of bidders for it now. The route is a lonesome one, and the quitting of three men in a hurry is enough to give it a black eye. I suppose Hopkins is holding on until his successor relieves him. I wouldn't take that contract for any price."

"I've just put in my bid, and have arranged with the manager of the express company to take the express matter in case I get the mail contract."

"How about your bond?"

"The president of the Clifton Bank has agreed to furnish it for me."

"Then your father is in favor of you taking it?"

"He doesn't know anything about it. I told Mr. Haywood to keep it quiet, as I wanted to surprise my father."

"I didn't know you had a pull with the president of the bank."

"He owes me a favor."

"Does he? Then why didn't you strike him for a position in the bank?"

"There isn't any opening at present."

"If he's willing to go on your bond, you're all right, provided your bid goes. What was your bid?"

"I'd rather not say."

The foregoing conversation took place just outside the Clifton post office, and the two boys were about to start down the street when Ted Barclay, the postmaster's son, came up to Joe Fletcher.

"I was just about to hunt you up, Fletcher. My father wants to see you right away," he said.

"All right," said Joe. "So long, Dick, I'll see you this evening, maybe."

Dick nodded and walked away, while Joe accompanied Ted into the post office. The postmaster was sitting at his desk in a corner of the room and Joe presented himself before him.

"Sit down, Fletcher," said Mr. Barclay. "You have submitted a bid to carry the mail between this town and Flushing and it has been indorsed by Mr. Sparks, the manager of the express company, while Mr. Haywood, president of the Clifton Bank, where your father is cashier, has agreed to go on your bond."

"Yes, sir."

"Your bid is all right, and if you were a man I'd accept it at once, for the defection of Hopkins has embarrassed me, and the mail has got to go through. I'll have to send it by my son this evening."

"I'll carry it for you to-night, whether I get the contract or not."

"I'm much obliged to you for your offer, but I couldn't intrust the mail bags to any unauthorized person. If you can satisfy me that you can carry out the contract, and that you won't quit like the others during the term of your agreement, we may be able to fix things up in time for you to make your first trip this evening. Are you acquainted with the route?"

"Like a book, sir. I've been over the road between here and Flushing several times on my wheel," replied Joe.

"But you've never been over it after dark?"

"I admit that, but that doesn't make any difference with me."

"It's a lonesome road."

"I know it is; but I don't mind that."

"In case you met with an obstacle along the road, what would you do?"

"Go through or over the obstacle if I couldn't get around it."

The postmaster nodded approvingly.

"You would have the right to do that, for the United States mail always has the right of way. You will require a wagon. Have you looked one up?"

"I can have old Si Jones' rig at the post office inside of an hour."

"I suppose your father will guarantee your efficiency?"

"I guess so. I haven't made any such suggestion to him, as I supposed the bond would cover everything."

"Practically it does, but as you're under age your father—however, we won't consider that now. All I want is to assure myself that I can depend on you."

"You can depend on me from the ground floor up. Do you mind telling me why Jud Hopkins backed out?"

The postmaster scratched his chin.

"I'm afraid I can't. It's a matter between him and me. Well, Fletcher, I guess I'll accept your bid and bond, and give you the chance to make good. Here's the bond. Take it to the president of the bank and get him to sign it. When you get back we'll sign the contract in duplicate. Then you can make arrangements about your wagon, so that you can report here at seven, ready to make your first trip."

"All right, sir," said Joe, pleased that he had come out ahead.

He carried the bond to the bank, asked for Mr. Haywood, and was told he had gone home an hour since. There was nothing for Joe to do but go to his house, which he did. Mr. Haywood was in his library and the boy was shown in there.

"Sorry to trouble you, Mr. Haywood, but the postmaster has accepted my bid, and he wants me to make my first trip to Flushing this evening, as soon as the night mail gets in from the East. It is therefore necessary that my bond should be executed right away so as to close the matter right up. I brought the bond around to you to sign, as you kindly promised to do me that favor."

"It will have to be executed before a notary, so we will go around to Mr. Hay's office and fix it up," said the banker.

"It is very kind of you to put yourself out for me, sir," said Joe gratefully.

"Don't mention it, Fletcher. I would do a great deal more than that for you. When you saved my little daughter from drowning in the lake you won a claim on my gratitude which can never be fully repaid."

With those words the banker put on his hat and they left the house together. The bond was duly executed and Joe delivered it to the postmaster. The contract was then signed in duplicate and that settled the business. Joe immediately notified Mr. Sparks, the manager of the express office, and signed an agreement with him covering the express matter.

"I start for Flushing at seven," said Joe.

"There will probably be several express packages come down by the mail train," said Sparks, "so stop here on your way to the post office."

"I'll be here," nodded Joe, who then started off to arrange with the Widow Jones for her late husband's horse and wagon on the terms she had mentioned to him when he told her that he was going to put in a bid for the mail route to Flushing, and would need the use of the rig if he connected with it. There was a barn on his father's property where he intended to keep the horse when not in use, while the wagon, which was a covered vehicle, could stand out of the way in the yard. He had no trouble in concluding the deal with the widow, and after paying her the first week's dollar, he hitched up and started for home.

CHAPTER II.—The Startling Recognition.

It was half-past five when Joe drove his rig into the yard of the little cottage where he lived with his father and sister. Throwing a blanket over the animal and placing a pail half full of oats under his nose, Joe went into the house, where he found his sister preparing supper. The table was set in the little living room and the meal was almost ready.

"Where's father?" asked Joe, after looking into the living room where his father was in the habit of reading his paper before supper.

"He hasn't come home yet," replied Doris Fletcher.

"No? He is late, isn't he?"

"Yes. I suppose he remained at the bank to

do something. He ought to be home, though, for he is going to Chester by the express which stops here at 6.20, and he will barely have time to eat his supper and catch the train."

"What's taking him to Chester?"

"Some important business for the bank."

After eating his supper, Joe told his sister about the mail contract and saying he was going to Flushing and would be gone all night, he started for the express office with the wagon. There were half a dozen express packages waiting for him, and he hustled them into the wagon and took the receipt book. Then he went on to the post office, picked up the mail and started for Flushing.

"You have a five-hour journey ahead of you," said the postmaster. "It's the character of the road that takes the time. You've got to go slow in places. See that you reach the Flushing post office on time—at least fifteen minutes before the boat is due there, so as to give the night man a chance to handle the mail. Hopkins missed the boat so often that—well, I mustn't keep you for you have no time to spare."

It was dark when Joe drove out of town into the county road, which he followed a short distance and then turned off into the Flushing road. For half the distance the road was good at that season and Joe made good time. He was perfectly familiar with it, and the difficulties that lay farther on. Some of those difficulties he had an idea he could surmount later, for he had discovered a by-path the last time he went on his wheel to Flushing which he believed could be used by the wagon. If that was possible, it would save an hour's time and avoid the worst section of the road.

As Joe drove along he kept his eyes wide open, watching not only the road ahead but the dark line of bushes on either side as well as he could in the darkness. His first trip was being made under disadvantageous circumstances, which he knew would affect him the most along the difficult stretch of the road—the night was very dark, the sky being overcast with clouds that threatened rain. There was nothing in his contract allowing him any latitude because of storm or darkness. He must be in Flushing on the stroke of midnight to be on time, for the boat often arrived several minutes ahead of her schedule time and got away as soon as she could. Her arrival was heralded by a long whistle, and this was the signal for the night man at the post office to close the mail bag and send it down to the wharf.

If the mail wagon from Clifton was not at the door when the whistle sounded the mail he brought to go by her had to wait till the next boat. This had rarely happened when Si Jones was on the route. In calm or storm, whether the road was open or clogged with snowdrifts, the old man was always on time, and many people marveled how he did it. Certainly his three successors failed to approach his record during their brief experience, and only the first of them had been obstructed by the snow. Of course, the first two claimed to have been attacked at different spots along the route, and that they only escaped by the skin of their teeth.

If Jud Hopkins had been up against a similar experience, the fact was not circulated. What an

old man like Si Jones could do, Joe felt that he could equal. At any rate, he intended to equal it, and do a bit better. Joe was wide-awake and watchful as he pushed on toward Flushing, because whether he believed the former contractors or not, he wasn't taking any more chances than he could help. At last he reached the difficult stretch of the route. Here he had to go slowly. It was on this part of the road that the alleged attacks had been made, and it was the best suited for a hold-up.

As Joe approached a turn in the road that offered favorable chances for a surprise, an idea suddenly occurred to him. What put the plan in his head he never could tell, for he did not seriously believe that he would be stopped that night, though the unusual darkness favored the commission of such a project. He tied the reins to the front post of the covered top and then, with a blanket, his overcoat and an old hat of Si Jones' he had found in the wagon, he made a dummy figure upon the seat, which he kept upright by means of some pieces of wood. He made the reins fast to the seat and jumping out of the vehicle he tramped behind the rig, watching first one side of the road and then the other.

Suddenly out of the darkness loomed two indistinct figures, one of which carried a lantern half hidden under his coat. Scouting danger, Joe pulled a light mail bag out of the wagon. This one, he knew, held the registered mail and money orders. His first intention was to drop it where he would be able to find it again. But when he saw there were but two men to deal with he changed his mind. The rascal in the lead seized the horse by the bridle while his companion flashed the lantern at the dummy figure on the seat. Joe crept upon the latter. Swinging the mail bag aloft he brought it down on the man's head. The fellow uttered a cry as he collapsed, that attracted the other's attention. The lantern and the revolver of the stricken scamp rolled together. Dropping the mail bag, Joe picked up both, flashing the former at the other man as he covered him with the latter.

"Now, you rascal!" he cried, in a determined tone.

What more he intended to say he never uttered. As the light fell full upon the man's countenance he recognized—his father!

CHAPTER III.—The Short Cut.

"Good heavens!" gasped Joe, hardly believing the evidence of his eyesight.

"Curse you, you young sculpin; I'll settle your hash!" exclaimed the man, in a hoarse voice.

He pulled out a revolver and aimed it straight at the boy.

"Don't shoot! Don't shoot, father! It is I—Joe!" cried the young mail contractor.

At that moment the sound of wheels following behind reached their ears. With an imprecation, the man lowered his weapon, jumped forward and struck the boy in the face a violent blow that sent him reeling backward, and grabbing his companion, who had just regained his feet, by the arm, dragged him off into the bushes. When

Joe recovered himself the second vehicle was close behind.

"Hello! Who's there?" cried the voice of a man out of the darkness, when he saw the flashing of the lantern in Joe's hand.

The young mail contractor was in such a state of mental confusion that he made no reply. He had been attacked by two men, whose purpose was clearly criminal, and one of them had proved to be his father, whom he supposed to be at Chester.

"Hello, there! Are you deaf?" cried the voice behind again.

This time Joe took notice of it.

"Who's there?" he asked.

"Dr. Jinks, of Flushing. Now oblige me by letting me know who you are."

"I'm the mail contractor," said Joe, in unsteady tones.

"How can you be the mail contractor when Jud Hopkins has the route?"

"He is out of it. I'm on it now."

"And that dark thing I see in the road is the mail wagon?"

"Yes."

"What are you stopping for? Met with an accident?"

"The wagon was held up by two men, but they ran away when they heard you coming up behind."

"Attacked by two men, eh? That's the same experience the two contractors before Hopkins had, or at least reported. You have a lantern; did you get a good look at them?"

"I didn't get much of a look," said Joe, in a hesitating way.

"Too bad," said Dr. Jinks. "Their description might enable the police to catch them. Those fellows must be hanging around here somewhere."

Joe didn't want to talk on the subject. He was still confused and mystified over the occurrence.

"You'd better get on your way, young man, for there isn't room enough for me to pass you. I've been out ever since two o'clock and I'm in a hurry to get home," said the doctor.

Conscious that he was not only blocking the road at that point, but also wasting time that might count against him, Joe got in the seat, upset the dummy, seized the reins and drove on. His thoughts were so jumbled up that he seemed to be the victim of an ugly dream. That his own father should be away out there on the Flushing road was to him preposterous. Had any one told him he had seen his father there, he wouldn't have believed it for an instant. But he couldn't go behind the evidence of his own eyesight.

Joe's enthusiasm over his job had fallen to a low ebb. So occupied was he, mentally, that he did not notice the horse, left to himself, turn off, just before the worst part of the road was reached, and take a narrow trail to the left. The horse was simply following the course he had always pursued when driven to and from Flushing by the late Si Jones. But for that fact Joe would have been late at the Flushing post office on his first trip and would have missed the boat, which would not have been to his credit. This route the horse was taking was the secret of old Si Jones always being on time. It saved him

at least thirty minutes and a lot of rough traveling.

The young mail contractor, however, woke up after a while to the fact that he was not encountering the obstacles that lined the rough part of the regular road. He looked around, and in spite of the darkness he realized that he was off the right road. The existence of the wagon path he was following puzzled him not a little. He had never heard anybody speak about it, though he had made many inquiries in Flushing concerning a shorter route than the regular road. The more he thought about the matter, the more curious he became to learn why the horse had turned into it on such a dark night.

"Jerry has been over the route so often that one would think he would follow the road he was accustomed to," muttered Joe.

As he gave utterance to the thought, the truth suddenly flashed across his mind.

"By George! Maybe this is the route that old Si really followed instead of the regular road," he exclaimed. "If so, it's a short cut as sure as eggs are eggs. I have heard Postmaster Barclay remark several times that he never could make out how Si Jones managed to make the trip in less than five hours with his old horse and heavy wagon. When the difficult section of the road was well-nigh impassable after a heavy snowfall, Si used to go through just the same within the regulation five hours. When asked to account for it, he used to cock up an eye, squirt a stream of tobacco juice and say that Jerry was the finest swimmer through snowdrifts he ever saw in a horse. That was all you could get out of him. I'll bet Si got on to this wagon track somehow, found it saved him considerable time, and then kept it to himself. He was a foxy old duck, Si was, from all I know and have heard about him. Now his horse has put me on to the secret of making time. Good for you, old boy! You shall feast on sugar every day for this."

Well, the long and short of it was Joe came out into the main road again, two miles this side of Flushing. He knew where he was now, and he stopped Jerry to make a note of the spot so he could connect with the path again on his return trip. He might have saved himself the trouble, for Jerry was bound to turn off there of his own accord when driven back, as Joe subsequently discovered, to his great satisfaction. Looking at his watch again, Joe saw that it was twenty minutes past eleven. Twenty minutes more would bring him to the post office. So Joe drove on, feeling mighty good, and the clock in the Flushing post office pointed to seventeen minutes of twelve when he halted the mail wagon at the door.

CHAPTER IV.—On Time.

"Who's there?" asked the assistant to the night man when Joe pounded on the door of the post office.

"Joe Fletcher, with the mail bags from Clifton," answered the boy.

The assistant looked at the clock.

"Say, Dockerty, here's the mail from Clifton, and it isn't twelve yet by fifteen minutes. A new man has brought it, and he must have a

spanking team to make the trip on such a night as this inside of the time limit."

With those words the young man threw open the door and Joe walked in with the mail pouches, which he threw down on the floor.

"Did you bring the mail yourself?" asked the assistant, surprised that a boy had been intrusted with the job.

"Me and the horse Jerry, with old Si Jones' wagon," grinned Joe.

"What's the matter with Jud Hopkins?"

"Was he here last night?"

"He was, and missed the boat by twenty minutes, something not unusual since he got the contract. Has the job been taken from him? I've been expecting it would, for we can't stand that kind of thing."

"He's out of it. I've got the contract."

Dockerty came over and was also surprised to find a boy instead of a man.

"Have you got the contract between here and Clifton?"

"I have," replied Joe.

"What's your name?"

"Joe Fletcher."

"Belong in Clifton, I suppose?"

"Yes. I've lived there almost all my life. My father"—Joe stopped for an instant with a gulp—"is cashier of the Clifton Bank. The president of the bank, Mr. Haywood, went on my bond."

"I guess you're all right, then. My name is Phil Dockerty. Glad to know you," and they shook hands. "I'm the night man, and this is my helper, Jack Sage."

Joe shook hands with Sage.

"Any of the packages marked for the steamer?"

"No. They all belong to this town."

"The express office closed at eight, so you can't go there at this hour. You can leave the packages here till the morning and deliver them just before you leave town with the return mail bags. The office is open at seven. As for the rig, you can take it to the stable in the next street. Sage will go around with you and show you where it is. Old Si and the other contractors put their horses up there. One of the stablemen sleeps overhead. You can wake him up and he'll tell you where to find the key. You'll have to attend to Jerry yourself, and you can make arrangements with the stablekeeper in the morning. As for yourself, you can come back here. There is a bunk upstairs you can use nights at the cost of one-fifty a week. You'll find a restaurant a few doors away where you get your breakfast in the morning," said Dockerty.

"Thanks," replied Joe, who then went out after the express bundles.

The steamer's mail bag was ready that night fifteen minutes before the boat's whistle was heard, and during that interval Jack Sage showed Joe around to the stable and aroused the stableman.

"This is a new mail driver, Mike, and he wants to put up his horse here. Where is the key?" asked Sage.

"It's hanging on a nail under that window. We always put it there at night for the mail contractor," returned the stableman. "He can put his horse in any one of the vacant stalls and I'll tend to him in the morning."

Sage hurried back to the post office, while Joe put his horse in one of the stalls, watered him, placed some oats before him and, relocking the stable door, went back to the post office, where he found Sage just back from the wharf with a mail bag. Joe was shown up to his bunk and he lost no time in turning in. Finally he fell asleep and did not open his eyes till Dockerty shook him into wakefulness at six o'clock.

"Get up, Fletcher. You have just an hour to get your breakfast and call at the express office unless you think you can get back to Clifton in less than five hours," he said.

"I guess I can make it in four and a half," said Joe, springing up, "but I can tell better after I've made the trip."

He found the restaurant open and doing business, and he got his breakfast. Then he called at the stable and arranged for the keep of his horse for six nights in the week, for he didn't have to carry any mail on Sunday. He helped hitch Jerry to the wagon, which had stood all night in the street, returned to the post office, where he got his express bundles, loaded on the mail bags, and then drove to the express office. He delivered a letter of introduction to the express agent.

Joe rushed the express packages into his wagon and started on his return trip. He kept his eyes skinned for the wagon path through the woods, but Jerry saw it before he did, and turned into it of his own accord. Joe got his credit slip for the packages he brought when he reached the Clifton post office, and then he started for home.

CHAPTER V.—Joe Calls at the Bank.

He found his sister anxiously awaiting him. She was cooking the mid-day meal to which Cashier Fletcher always came to partake of around one o'clock. The moment Doris saw Joe drive into the yard she ran out of the kitchen to welcome him back.

"I've been worried about you ever since you went away. I thought you'd be overtaken by a storm, the night was so dark and threatening," she said.

"I thought so myself, but when a fellow is carrying the United States mail he mustn't shy at such a thing as a rain storm en route. I'm not made of sugar or salt, and won't melt if I get wet. However, there wasn't any rain," said Joe. "Did father show up last night?"

"Of course not. Didn't I tell you he went to Chester on important business for the bank?"

"When did he say he was coming back?" said Joe, as he released Jerry from the shafts.

"He told me he would return by an early afternoon train, go direct to the bank and come home to his supper as usual."

Joe put Jerry in the stall he had assigned to him, after giving him a combing down, and went into the house, where he found dinner ready. Of course, his father had not gone to Chester, according to his statement to Doris, else he would not have been on the Flushing road, fifteen miles or more from Clifton, when he should have been on the train. The mystery of his father's actions

both puzzled and alarmed Joe. He could find no explanation for his father's conduct the preceding night and so, with a sinking heart, he left the house after dinner and started for the bank to find out if he was really supposed to have gone to Chester on business for the institution.

When he walked in he went to the little office used by his father, between the counting room proper and the president's room. He opened the door without knocking and found himself face to face with Mr. Haywood and the head bookkeeper. They looked at him without a word of greeting, and it struck him as if their manner was somewhat embarrassed, particularly Mr. Haywood. It wasn't like the banker, since the great service Joe had rendered him in saving the life of his little daughter, not to greet him in a particularly friendly way.

"My father hasn't got back from Chester yet, I suppose?" said Joe.

"Chester!" said Mr. Haywood. "Did he go to Chester?"

Joe gave the president a blank stare.

"He hasn't been home since yesterday noon, when he came to dinner as usual," replied the boy hesitatingly. "Then he told my sister that he was going to take the 6.20 express for Chester, where he had business of importance to execute for the bank. As he hasn't been home since we, of course, supposed he had gone on the journey. As he told my sister he would return by an early afternoon train, I thought I'd drop in and see if he was here yet."

Mr. Haywood and the head bookkeeper looked at each other. After a momentary hesitation, during which Joe thought the president looked at him very queerly, Mr. Haywood said:

"Come into my private room, Fletcher."

Joe, feeling sure there was something wrong in the wind, followed him.

"So you don't know anything about your father's movements since yesterday noon?" said the president, after they were seated.

"Why do you ask me such a question, Mr. Haywood? What's happened to my father? You must know something is wrong, or you wouldn't speak to me this way," said Joe, very uneasy.

"Well, Fletcher, I'll be frank with you. Your father was to have gone to Chester by the 6.20 express last evening with a valuable package for the Chester Bank, and we supposed, until half an hour ago, that he had gone. He left the bank at a few minutes after five with the package, which would have given him plenty of time to go home, eat his supper and catch the train. Now you say he hasn't been home since yesterday noon?"

"No, sir. I haven't seen him myself since yesterday morning, as I didn't get home to my dinner until after he had gone back to the bank. The first I heard about his going to Chester was when my sister told me last night at supper. She couldn't understand why father didn't come to his supper, and had to conclude that he was detained at the bank and went to the station direct from there."

"No, he was not detained here. I remained till a quarter-past five myself, and he left a few minutes before me."

"With the package he was to carry to Chester?"

The banker nodded.

"Then he surely intended to go to Chester," said Joe.

"It was his duty to go there."

"You seem to have a suspicion that he didn't go."

"Half an hour ago we received a telegram from the Chester Bank inquiring about the contents of the package your father carried away with him. From that it is evident that your father had not delivered the package up to noon to-day."

"Something must have happened to him."

"It would seem so. I am about to send for a detective to trace him up."

"Did my father take any money with him? What was in the package, if it's a proper question for me to ask?"

"There were \$10,000 worth of negotiable bonds in the package."

"Then if my father——"

Joe paused in an embarrassed way.

"What were you going to say?"

Joe didn't repeat what had been on the tip of his tongue, but instead he said:

"If he met with foul play and was robbed, could the thief turn the bonds into money?"

"He probably could—in some distant city."

Joe remained silent.

"Well, Fletcher, I won't prolong this interview, as I must communicate with the police and see what can be done about finding your father and the bonds. In the meantime, don't feel discouraged, for all may yet turn out well. Don't say a word to your sister on the subject more than you can help. She'll be worried enough if your father fails to turn up this evening."

"I won't say much to her. The worst of it is, she'll be alone all night, for I have to start for Flushing at seven with the mail, and I won't get back until noon to-morrow. I was out last night on my first trip and did not see my sister till dinner time to-day," said Joe seriously.

"You made the trip to Flushing and back all right, then?"

"Yes, sir. I was easily on time at both ends."

"Glad to hear it. You had a bad night for your try-out. You think you will be able to carry out the contract?"

"I feel confident I will, sir. It is hard, though, to have this trouble happen to my father at the very outset of my business career."

"It certainly is, and you have my sympathy. If I can do anything more to help you on your contract, don't fail to apply to me."

"Thank you, sir."

"As for your sister, if your father is not heard from by nightfall, I will send a woman to your house to keep her company," said the banker, rising.

That closed the interview and Joe left the bank.

CHAPTER VI.—Joe Picks Up an Extra Load.

It was then about two o'clock and Joe had still five hours at his disposal. He didn't want to go home, for he was afraid his face would tell his sister that something was wrong, so he went around to his friend Spencer's house to see if he

was home. Dick, however, had gone off somewhere after dinner and his mother didn't know where. Joe called on two or three of his other high school mates, but failed to find them in either. He strolled down Main street till he came to a large wholesale grocery store. He walked in and asked for one of the firm and was directed to a private office back of the counting room.

"What can I do for you, young man?" said the senior partner of the firm of Cook & Casey.

"You sell groceries to dealers in Flushing, don't you?" said Joe.

"We do. Are you from Flushing?"

"No, sir. I'm the new mail contractor between this town and Flushing. I make a trip to that town every night and return on the following forenoon."

"Well?" said Mr. Cook, wondering what that had to do with him.

"As I have plenty room in the wagon, I was figuring on carrying some goods from this place to Flushing if I could get them. I'm willing to do the hauling cheap, provided I can deliver them early in the morning. How do you send your goods?"

"By one of our wagons when we have a fair load to send there; otherwise, we send them by express. As I believe the mail wagon carries the express packages, you'll take the goods anyway."

"I suppose I have no right to cut in on the express business as long as I have an agreement with the manager to carry all express packages?"

"I suppose not. What would you deliver a barrel of flour or sugar in Flushing for?"

"Twenty-five cents," said Joe, at a hazard.

"That's considerable less than the express company charges, so we don't often send single barrels that way, nor anything if we can help ourselves. Wait a moment."

Mr. Cook went outside. He returned in a few moments.

"We have a number of boxes of groceries which we have been holding to send by one of our wagons. If you want to take them with you to-night we'll pay you a quarter apiece to deliver them in Flushing for us."

"How many boxes are there?"

"About a dozen."

"I'll take them," said Joe promptly.

"They all go to one store. Bring back the receipt with you and collect your money," said Mr. Cook.

"What time do you close?"

"At six."

"I'll call for the goods at half-past five," said Joe. "I'll be happy to take other goods for you at any time."

"Then drop in daily and we will let you carry any small orders we may have."

Joe departed, delighted with his success. He visited several other wholesale stores, but got nothing but promises. Joe now went home. He found his sister sewing in the living room.

"You're going out again this evening, I suppose?" said Doris.

"Of course. The only night I don't travel is Sunday," replied her brother.

"What time do you want your supper?"

"About six."

"That's about our regular time. Father will be home then."

She spoke in a matter-of-fact way, as if there was no doubt about the coming of the master of the house at his usual time. Joe made no reply. He was afraid that his father wouldn't be home, and then he knew that his sister would have a fit. There was no use worrying her in advance, so he walked out to see how Jerry was coming on in his new quarters. He brought the animal some sugar, and he appeared to be quite contented. As it was getting on to five he hitched the horse to the wagon and drove down to the grocery store, where he loaded on the boxes. Then he returned home and found supper ready.

"Father ought to be home before this," said Doris, as she placed Joe's portion on the table.

"Maybe he hasn't got back from Chester," suggested her brother.

"What makes you think he hasn't?" she said quickly. "He told me that he would return by the train due here at half-past four."

"I don't know anything about it. I merely said so, for the bank has been closed for an hour, and it's only about a fifteen minutes' walk for him."

Doris began to look worried.

"I wish he'd come," she said.

"So do I," said Joe, in a solemn tone.

At that moment the doorbell rang and Doris answered it.

"Mr. Haywood's gardener is at the door. He brought this and is waiting for an answer," she said, on returning to the living room.

Joe opened the letter and read the following brief note:

"Has your father turned up?"

"John Haywood."

Joe took out a pencil and wrote under it:

"No. Please send the woman over to keep my sister company. I shall leave the house in a few minutes, and as it's past father's time for getting home, Doris is getting uneasy."

"Yours respectfully,

"JOE FLETCHER."

He took it out himself to the messenger and dismissed him, then he returned to finish his supper. He found his sister watching from the window. There was silence in the room until he got up.

"Good-by, sis; I'm off!" he said, with forced cheerfulness.

"Oh, Joe, Joe, what can be keeping father to-night?" she said, throwing her arms around his neck and beginning to cry.

"Brace up, Doris. Don't be foolish," he said.

He kissed her and walked out into the yard. Turning his rig around, he drove out into the street and took his way to the express office, where he found a number of packages awaiting him. He placed them in the wagon and drove to the post office, where he got the mail bags.

"It's a fine night alongside last evening," said Ted Barclay. "You ought to make the trip in time."

"I intend to be in Flushing at half-past eleven," said Joe confidently.

"You seem able to get the same speed out of Jerry as old Si did. I guess you'll be a success."

"If I'm not, it won't be my fault," said Joe, getting up on the seat. "Good night. I'll give your regards to Sage."

Fifteen minutes later he turned into the Flushing road. He had a red lantern burning in the rear and a white one in front, this time. With the revolver ready cocked beside him on the seat he guessed he could risk another hold-up if it came. In any case, the night was too clear to permit him to repeat the dummy game to any advantage. Mile after mile was reeled off at a steady jog-trot, which Jerry kept up with a steadiness that did the old horse credit. At length the rougher part of the road was reached and Joe's heart beat quicker as he approached the turn where the trouble had happened the night before. Nothing occurred this time. Not a sound broke the stillness of the night but the rustling of the tree branches, which were still in their winter nakedness.

They nodded slightly at him as he passed, as though extending a friendly greeting to the new mail contractor. Joe thought how easy it would be to stop the mail wagon by stretching a taut rope across the road. In a few minutes Jerry turned off into the short cut and still maintained his steady gait. It was a gloomy route through the woods, but Joe didn't care for that. In due time the outfit struck the road again. Joe looked at his watch. It was ten minutes of eleven. He was certain to reach the Flushing post office at ten minutes past—a clear gain of fifty minutes over his schedule.

"We are the people, aren't we, Jerry?" said the young mail contractor. "We are bound to be always on time."

Jack Sage answered his knock and was surprised to see the Clifton mail wagon already arrived.

"Say, you're going some, Fletcher!" he said.

"You mean I have been going some. Just at present I'm at a standstill," said Joe.

"You're fifty minutes ahead of your time."

"You ain't sorry, are you?"

"Sorry! I should say not! I won't have to do any hustling with the steamer bag, as I've had to do since Si Jones turned up his toes. I had it easy when Si was on the route, and it looks as if I'll have it easy with you. I don't see how you could make so much better time than the other contractors."

"Never mind the other contractors. They bit off more than they could chew. You can expect to see me every night about this time if nothing unusual happens to me."

"You've got a lot of express matter."

"Those twelve boxes forward are not express matter. That's a special load I agreed to deliver in this town. It nets me \$3 extra."

"If you can get more of the same kind, you'll do well."

Joe carried the express packages into the post office and then went to the stable. He found the key on its nail, and after putting Jerry in his stall he carried in the boxes of groceries and piled them up near the door, for he didn't care to leave them exposed in the wagon outside for the rest of the night. He returned to the post office and was in bed before the steamer's whistle announced her arrival.

CHAPTER VII.—The Mystery of Joe's Father Deepens.

Joe didn't leave Flushing until half-past seven next morning, for he had the boxes of groceries to deliver, which were duly receipted for, consequently he didn't reach the Clifton post office until about a quarter of twelve. As that was fifteen minutes ahead of his limit, the postmaster was well pleased. He drove into the yard of his home at half-past twelve, dreading to meet his sister. After putting up his horse he entered the house. He found his sister in the kitchen.

"Father came home last night just at dark," she said.

"He did!" exclaimed Joe, clearly surprised.

"Why do you act so astonished? Did you think he wasn't coming?" she said.

"I admit I had that suspicion."

"Why?"

"Well, you see I was at the bank, and from what Mr. Haywood told me, I feared—that is, I thought father would not be at home last night."

"You never told me you were at the bank. Why didn't you?"

"Oh, I had my reasons."

"What were your reasons?"

"What difference do they make now, since father turned up?"

"But he didn't stay. He told me he had some special business on hand connected with the bank which would keep him away for a few days. I don't know what to think about it, Joe. He acted very funny. He didn't seem at all like his usual self. If I didn't know it was father I was speaking to, I would have thought it was somebody else. His voice sounded hoarse, as if he had a bad cold. He barely kissed me when he came in, and I threw my arms around his neck. All the time he was talking he kept looking around the room. He ate his supper hurriedly, saying he had no time to spare. After he got through, he said he was going to his room. He told me to go up ahead of him and open the door, which seemed queer of him. He never did that before."

"Then he sent me downstairs, telling me that if anybody called and asked for him I was to say he was not at home. I heard him moving about the room for some time. Finally he came down with his valise in his hand. Then saying he would be back in three or four days, he kissed me, but so differently from his customary way, and left the house. Soon after a woman called and said Mr. Haywood had sent her to stay with me that night and that she would come each night to keep me company till father got back, which assured me that Mr. Haywood knew that father was going on a trip that would take him several days," said Doris.

Joe was somewhat staggered by what his sister told him. It seemed clear to him that his father was going away to sell the bonds, which meant that he had yielded to the temptation of acquiring \$10,000 by unlawful means. Why had his father, who had always borne an excellent character, blasted his reputation by one mad act, which was bound to separate him from his children, perhaps forever?

"Father must have suddenly gone crazy," Joe thought. "People sometimes do break out that

way without apparent cause. His strange behavior to Doris as well as myself, and his changed manner all lead me to believe that his mind is unhinged. I must call on Mr. Haywood, after dinner, and tell him what I think. My father would never become a thief and absconder if he knew what he was about."

So reasoned Joe, but whether he was right or not remains to be seen. His sister, though wondering at her father's strange deportment, had no suspicion of the truth, and Joe did not propose to let out any hints that would arouse her uneasiness. She believed her father had gone on a second errand for the bank, which would occupy several days of his time, and she would not look for him before the middle of the following week, for this was Saturday. As dinner was ready, Joe sat down to it, and Doris ate with him. The conversation was chiefly about the boy's mail-carrying job, and his sister began to think that he hadn't made a mistake at all in taking it.

"Of course I made no mistake, Doris," said Joe. "I get fair pay for the mail contract and extra money for carrying the express matter, though that doesn't amount to a whole lot at present, for there aren't many packages to carry. I look to make considerable extra money by carrying goods to Flushing that dealers here don't want to pay express rates on. Last night I carried twelve boxes of groceries. I'll get \$3 for that as soon as I present the receipts at Cook & Casey's store. That's \$3 extra profit—clear gain, for it gave me no trouble to take them along. I expect to make a good thing out of the route as I get used to it."

"Well, I'm glad you've got something to do and that you're pleased with the work," said his sister.

"I'm extra well pleased to be my own boss. I won't be bothered by anybody watching my actions. I can do as I please as long as I deliver the mail bags at each end on time."

"I'm glad you'll be home on Sunday night, at any rate," said Doris.

"I'm glad myself. A fellow likes at least one evening a week to himself."

Joe finished his dinner and started for the wholesale grocery store to collect his \$3. He received the money on presenting the receipt for the goods at the cashier's window. Then he asked the head clerk if there would be anything going to Flushing that evening.

"We have a barrel of sugar, one of flour, a bag of coffee and four cases of canned goods. Have you seen either of the bosses about taking them?"

"No. Mr. Cook told me to drop in every day and inquire. If he didn't have enough stuff to pay to send by one of the store wagons, I was to take it at a figure agreed upon between us."

"I'll see Mr. Cook about what we have to send. He might prefer to hold it over in anticipation of a full load on Monday."

"Hold on," said Joe, recollecting. "I won't be able to deliver your goods to-morrow morning, because it's Sunday."

"That's all right. If you take them you can deliver them Monday morning."

"I can't do that, either."

"Why not?"

"I don't carry any mail out Sunday night, con-

sequently I won't be in Flushing Monday morning."

"Then I don't see any use of you taking the stuff."

"I might leave the goods at the stable and arrange with a local expressman to deliver them at the dealer's store they're consigned to," said Joe.

"You could do that if Mr. Cook has no objection to the arrangement."

"Then I'd better go in and talk with him myself."

"I guess you'd better."

So Joe went in to see the senior partner of the firm. He stated the case to him.

"What time do you get to Flushing?" asked Mr. Cook.

"Between a quarter and half-past eleven."

"As it's Saturday night, the store the goods are bound for might be open at half-past eleven."

"Well, sir, if you'll send a dispatch to the proprietor telling him that his goods will arrive at the store to-night about half-past eleven, I'll pay for it," said Joe.

"I'll send the dispatch, but you needn't pay for it. You will have a couple of heavy barrels along, and as they go at the same rate as the boxes, why, I don't mind making things as easy for you as I can."

"Much obliged. I'll call at half-past five for the goods, and guarantee to deliver them on or before half-past eleven in Flushing."

The matter being settled, Joe left the store and walked to the bank. Mr. Haywood had just got back from his lunch.

"You haven't heard anything from your father yet, I suppose?" said the banker.

"Yes, sir."

"Ah! Has he been brought home hurt?"

"No, sir. He came home himself last evening just after I left on my trip."

The banker was too surprised to speak.

"I am sorry to say, Mr. Haywood, that there is evidently something the matter with my father. He acted very strangely toward my sister, something he has never done before in his life. It is my opinion that he's mentally unbalanced."

"Explain just why you think so," said Mr. Haywood.

Joe repeated his sister's story as well as he could recall the facts.

"You say he only stayed to eat his supper, then he went to his room, packed his valise and left, telling your sister he was going on business for the bank and would be away several days?"

"Yes, sir."

"It certainly is very strange conduct on his part."

"Very strange it is. That's why I think he must be off his balance."

"He looked all right when he left the bank day before yesterday with that valuable package."

"He's been your confidential assistant for a good many years and has handled a lot of your money. I hope you do not think he has appropriated the contents of the package and has left Clifton with the intention of disposing of the bonds and keeping the money."

"The information you have brought me is of

so astonishing a character that it is impossible for me to form any conclusion. I will say, however, that your father is the last man I would ordinarily consider capable of such a dishonorable and criminal an act. He has had my full confidence, and he has had it in his power to rob the bank of more than double the value of the bonds in cash had he the mind to do so. Therefore, it does not seem natural for him to run off with those bonds and take the risk of turning them into cash, particularly as he might just as well have taken more than that amount of money.

"Not a dollar of the bank's funds is missing. Your father had full charge of the vault where we keep our securities, our mortgages, and our surplus cash. Before he left Thursday afternoon he saw that all the current cash and books were placed in the vault, then he set the time-lock, as usual. Knowing he would not be on hand next morning, I came down early and opened the vault so that the books and money could be taken out for the transaction of the business of the day. Had anything been wrong, I would soon have discovered it."

"Thank you for telling me this. It proves that my father has not deliberately robbed the bank of the bonds. It is clear that when he told my sister that he was going away to be gone several days on business for the bank, that he did not know what he was talking about. As I am sure he is out of his head, he ought to be followed and brought back, for there is no telling what might happen to him. Besides, he has the bonds in his possession and he might easily be robbed of them."

"I shall send for a detective at once and hold a consultation with him. He will doubtless call on your sister and interview her concerning your father's return last night. I suppose your father did not say where he was going?"

"I do not think so, or my sister would have told me. She will surely have a fit the moment she understands that anything is wrong about father. I think I had better prepare her for the officer's visit."

"You had better. What time do you go on your trip to Flushing?"

"I leave the house at half-past six and the town about seven."

"You had better go home at once and see your sister. Break the matter as gently as you can to her."

"I will. It's a job I hate to do, but it's got to be done, and the sooner I do it the better."

Joe got up, said good afternoon, and started for home. His interview with Doris was a painful one.

"I knew there was something wrong with him," she sobbed. "He didn't treat me like a daughter at all, particularly after being absent two nights and a day, and about to leave us for an even longer time. He acted most strangely—not at all as he has ever done before. Do you really think there is something the matter with his head?"

"There must be, Dorie. He hasn't been near the bank since he left on Thursday at about five, and he is carrying around with him a valuable package of bonds."

"Where could he have been Thursday night and all day Friday?"

"I haven't the least idea, but I guess he wasn't in town, for he is so well known he would have been recognized by somebody."

"He didn't act at all crazy to me, only markedly different from his usual self."

"I don't imagine that he's really crazy. Business cares and responsibilities often temporarily unhinge a man's brain, and they wander off, sometimes to a considerable distance, and the people who meet them do not always notice anything wrong about them. Then they just as suddenly recover their full reason and return to their home."

The detective did not call up to the time Joe hitched his horse up to go to the grocery store after the stuff he was to carry to Flushing, nor had he been there yet when the boy returned home for his supper. As the woman was coming over again to stop all night with Doris, the young mail contractor left for the express office at the usual time.

CHAPTER VIII.—The Second Attack.

It was an ordinary spring night when Joe took the road again for Flushing. Postmaster Barclay told him to be watchful, for the registered mail was heavier than usual.

"Oh, I've got a six-shooter with me, so it won't be healthy for any rascal to try and stop me," said Joe.

"I meant to ask you if you had provided yourself with a revolver. I don't mind telling you now that the real cause why Hopkins lost the contract was because he lost the registered mail bag one night," said the postmaster. "He said he was suddenly attacked about fifteen miles from Flushing by two men, one of whom he swore was your father."

"My father!" cried Joe.

"Yes. His statement seemed absurd, but he stuck to it. It happened he had just looked at his watch and was positive as to the time—half-past nine. A quiet investigation demonstrated that at that hour on the evening in question your father was attending a meeting of his lodge. Now, as he couldn't very well have been in two places many miles apart at the same time, and, further, as he's a man of excellent reputation, Hopkins' story was not believed, and he has been under arrest ever since on suspicion that he knows where the registered mail went. But this is in strict confidence, Fletcher."

"The case has been kept quiet and none of the particulars has got into the newspapers. There is a government secret service man investigating the affair. As Hopkins' story resembles in many details the stories told by the previous contractors who declared they had also been attacked on the road more than once and fired at by two men whose features they did not see, owing to which they threw up the job, regarding it as too dangerous for the money, there is reason to believe that a couple of scoundrels are making attempts to rob the mail wagon. For that reason I warn you to be very wide awake as you go over the road."

"I intend to be, for I know the responsibility that rests on my shoulders," replied Joe, who

then drove off. "Mr. Barclay little thinks that Hopkins was really right when he said he recognized my father. And yet he must have been mistaken on the night in question, for if my father was at his lodge he couldn't very well be on the Flushing road at the same time. Besides, Jud Hopkins' run-in with the two men happened before my father came under the cloud that now surrounds him, so, of course, it couldn't have been my father he saw on the road. But if he told a straight story, the man must have greatly resembled my father, for Hopkins would hardly accuse my father without what he considered good cause."

Somehow or another Joe felt a bit uneasy as he turned into the Flushing road. The postmaster's warning was not without its effect on his mind. He determined to be more than ordinarily vigilant that night.

"I wish Dick were along. The two of us would be able to put up a good fight, and maybe do up any one who attacked the wagon," he muttered.

He took care to place the revolver at full cock on the seat beside him to have it handy in case of emergency. A strong wind, coming from the Great Lakes, twenty-five miles or so away, blew keen and cold across the fields and shook the trees that lined both sides of the road. The bushes also rustled under its influence. There was no moon, and the sky was flecked all over with clouds that hid the light of half the stars.

It was a night well suited for deeds of violence on that lonely stretch.

It was not dark enough for Joe to resort to the ruse which saved him on his first trip, so he had to take his chances. He had one advantage, and that was in his horse, which did not require much attention. Jerry could go it alone just as well as not. Probably old Si Jones tied the reins to the seat and then lay down in the body of the wagon, with a mail bag for a pillow and went to sleep. There was hardly any travel over the Flushing road at night, and one might travel it from end to end without meeting another vehicle.

Jerry, if left to himself, would take the short cut when he came to it, and had the young contractor dropped dead in the vehicle, like old Si Jones did on his last trip to Flushing, the horse would have carried the wagon straight to the post office, as he had done on that melancholy occasion, and stopped there at the door. So Joe, after getting well along on the road, having full confidence in Jerry, tied the reins to the seat and busied himself making a barricade at the back of the wagon out of the two heavy barrels and the boxes of canned goods. He took the precaution of placing the pouch containing the registered mail under one of the barrels, and the rest of the bags he shoved under the seat. The dozen packages of express matter he put out of the way on either side of the wagon, which left him plenty of room to move around it.

His arrangements being completed, he blew the lights out of the two lanterns and, squatting down behind the seat, let matters take their course. The wind became stronger as he encountered its full sweep, but it did not seem to affect Jerry any, for he kept up his steady jog-trot, the sound of his hoofs ringing along the road. Joe had his hand on the revolver as they approached the turn where the former hold-up had taken place.

Suddenly a man dashed out of the bushes and reached for Jerry's check rein. Another man appeared on the other side with a drawn revolver and shouted, in a hoarse voice:

"Halt!"

Joe wasted no time in asking them what they wanted, for it was easy to see what their purpose was. He simply took quick aim at the first man and fired. The bullet took a piece out of his ear and brought a cry to his lips. The other man, with an imprecation, fired at Joe's head, which was the only part of him that was exposed. The bullet hummed a foot away and tore a hole in the canvas side of the wagon.

"Get up, Jerry!" shouted Joe, giving the reins a tug, and firing at the first man again to keep him from catching hold of the horse.

A second shot came from the man on the other side. It struck the seat and sent a shower of splinters in the boy's face. Then Jerry, getting a fast gait on for him, passed the two men. Joe rushed back to his barricade and saw the men running after the vehicle. Although the young mail contractor could not make out the face of the man who had done the firing, he felt sure from his appearance that it was his father.

"It's a mighty strange freak of the brain to turn an honest man into a highwayman," thought the boy. "If father should be caught at this business, it would create a sensation among his friends in Clifton."

As the two men were overtaking the wagon, Joe opened fire on them to frighten them off. He had no thought of shooting his father, nor did he want to kill the other fellow, for it is a solemn thing to shed human blood, even in self-defense. Both men returned the fire and the bullets lodged in the barrels. Finally, one of Joe's shots slightly wounded one of the men. Joe couldn't tell which, and they hauled off after a parting shot each, and the wagon went on its way with a clatter and wobble from side to side, owing to the uneven character of the road.

Jerry gradually subsided to his customary trot, and presently turned off into the short cut. The wheels made little noise in the ruts worn smooth by months of travel over them in old Si Jones' time, and Jerry's hoofs were deadened by the turfy nature of the path. Joe felt the wind less in the woods because the trees offered themselves as obstacles to its wild sweep, but he could hear it whistling around him at a great rate. He now had time to think, and the presumed reappearance of his father on the road again worried him not a little.

He supposed when his sister told him that their parent had called at the cottage for the purpose of getting his valise that he intended going off somewhere to a distance from Clifton. It was possible that he had deferred, not altered, his purpose. Still, if his clouded brain had any intention of turning the bundle of bonds into cash in some distant city, it seemed odd that he would take all the risks of capture in order to rob the mail wagon. Possibly it was a final attempt before leaving the neighborhood.

Another thing that interested Joe was the identity of the man who was helping his father in his crooked work. Where and how had he picked him up? Where did they keep in hiding

during the day? As the previous contractors had reported the same kind of attacks by two men that Joe had experienced, the boy wondered what had become of the one whose place seemed to be filled by his father. He likewise wondered why the detectives who first took the business in hand had failed to find any trace of the highwaymen.

When Joe reached town it was close on to half-past eleven, and he drove at once to the store where he had to deliver the goods. He found that it was closed for business, but the proprietor, having received the telegram, was waiting for his goods to come. He helped Joe unload the articles and take them into the store, then he signed the receipt and the young mail contractor went to the post office.

"Took you longer to get here to-night," said Sage, looking at the clock. "That doesn't make any difference, as you're on time."

"I brought some goods which I had to deliver first," answered Joe. "I made a little extra money by doing so, and everything counts when a fellow is out for himself."

"Sure it does," nodded Sage. "I'd have done the same if I was in your shoes."

Joe helped carry in the mail bags, also the express packages, and then he went to the stable and put up his team.

CHAPTER IX.—Taken By Surprise.

After an early breakfast he loaded up the mail from Clifton and started back. It was a cool, cloudy morning, and as Jerry would have a good long rest between his arrival and Monday night, Joe touched him up, as he wanted to get to Clifton by eleven. Having a light load, he saw no reason why he shouldn't exceed his record. He passed through the short cut and came out into the road beyond. So far he hadn't met with a soul since leaving Flushing. He didn't look for any trouble in the daylight, and was whistling cheerfully as he rode along, when he suddenly heard a noise at the back of the wagon. He looked around and saw a stout, red-headed boy scrambling into the vehicle.

"Here, what do you want?" asked Joe.

"I want a ride, mister," said the boy.

"All right. Come here on the seat."

"This is the mail wagon, ain't it?"

"That's what it is."

"You're a new hand at the business."

"Yes. Why don't you get on the seat? How far are you going?"

"Not far. See that tree yonder at the turn of the road?"

"I see it."

"That's as far as I'm going."

"You might have walked that far."

"I thought I'd ride," grinned the boy.

"Where do you live around here?"

"Behind them trees yonder," pointing to the right of the road.

"I didn't know there was a house in that spot."

"You can't see it from the road."

"But when the road turns you can see behind those trees."

"That's where I live."

"It must be a small house or I should have noticed it."

"I'll show it to you when we get to the turn."

"What do you do—farm work?"

"Me! Do I look like a farmer?"

"I can't say you do. You look more like a city boy."

Joe might have added that he looked like a tough one, but he didn't.

"You live in Clifton?" asked the boy.

"Yes. I've lived there most of my life."

"How came you to take hold of this job?"

"Because there's money in it for me."

The boy grinned in a peculiar way.

"How much money?"

"What do you want to know for?" said Joe, thinking the boy mighty curious.

"I thought maybe you'd like a partner," said the boy, with another grin.

"There's only enough in the job for one."

"How long have you had it?"

"Since the middle of the week."

"How long do you expect to hold it?"

"Till my contract expires, at any rate."

"How long is that?"

"A year."

"Two or three men had it before you. Why didn't they hold it for a year?"

"I didn't ask them."

"I know why."

"Oh, you do!"

"Two of 'em got scared and the other lost the mail."

"How do you know one of them lost the mail?" asked Joe, in surprise, for the postmaster had told him, when he let the matter out, that the news had not been given out to the public.

"You're going to lose it, too," said the red-headed boy, as they swung around the turn.

"What the dickens—"

"There's my house yonder," said the boy, pointing.

Joe looked, but he couldn't see any house.

"I don't see—" he began.

That was as far as he got, for the red-headed youth suddenly grabbed him around the neck and jerked him backward off the seat. At the same moment two men sprang out of the bushes into the road. While one stopped the horse, the other climbed into the wagon where Joe was struggling on the seat with the red-headed youth, who had a regular garroter's grip about his neck. The man pulled a piece of rope out of his pocket and bound the young mail contractor's arms to his body. As he proceeded to gag the boy, Joe recognized the man as his father. He stopped struggling at once and tried to make a protest, but the cloth was about his mouth and he couldn't utter a sound. Then he was roughly pulled into the wagon as the second man climbed in.

"The mail bags look thin," said the fellow, as he pulled them out from under the seat. "I guess we haven't made much of a haul this time."

"What's the difference? It's the horse and wagon we want more than anything else just now," said the man who wore the face and form of Joe's father.

"I know that, Fletcher," said his companion, "but everything is fish that comes to our net. What shall we do with the boy? We can't let him go, for he would run to town and put pursuit

on our track. We want to get as good a start as possible."

"We'll take him with us to the house for the present—what's that? I hear the sound of wheels. We must get away from here without delay. It won't do for us to be seen. Turn the horse into the lane and drive ahead."

The fellow addressed, whose name was Biggs, grabbed the reins, turned the horse into the lane near by, on the left-hand side looking toward Clifton, and drove on. The red-headed boy sat on Joe's legs to hold him down, while Fletcher stood up and kept track of things in general. The wagon proceeded to the head of the lane and then turned into another lane, which finally landed them in the yard of a deserted old farmhouse which had not been occupied for many years. Joe and the mail bags were taken out and carried into the house. The young mail contractor was placed in a corner with the red-headed youth standing over him as guard, while the two men coolly proceeded to cut open the mail pouches and dump their contents on a deal table.

"Here's the registered mail," said Biggs.

"Hand the bundle over and open the ordinary letters. You might find some money in two or three of them. There was lots of people who send money in the ordinary mail. We found quite a few dollars in our last haul," said Fletcher.

The damaged pouches were dropped on the floor and during the next few minutes the despoilers of the mail devoted their attention to slicing open letter after letter in search of money. The light registered package yielded about \$85, while the ordinary letters panned out less than \$2 in small silver. Fletcher took charge of the plunder.

"Return all the letters to one of the bags. We'll leave them here with the other bags we got, to be found by the first person coming into the house, which probably won't be soon."

"I'm glad you've decided to make a move. I never could see the sense in our hanging around this locality and risking capture, after you got hold of that package of bonds," said Biggs.

"I had my reasons," said Fletcher shortly. "Got all the letters in the bag? Well, toss them in the closet. Then after I attend to my——"

He paused suddenly as his eyes fell on Joe.

"Take that chap into the front room, and you stay with him, Jimmy, till we're ready to leave," he said.

Joe was removed to the front room by Biggs and the red-headed youth. Biggs then returned to the other room, leaving the boy Jimmy to watch the young mail contractor. Joe, as may be imagined, was not in a cheerful frame of mind. He saw visions of trouble ahead for himself with the post office authorities. He had been captured at last and robbed of his bags, and his story would be the same as Jud Hopkins'. Furthermore, he would be obliged to incriminate his father, for how could he tell his story without describing the men who had attacked and done him up?

The thought of that was not the least of his troubles. Having the use of his eyes and ears, he had watched his father attentively, and listened to his talk. He did not act or talk like a man out of his mind in the slightest degree. His

conduct and conversation was that of an experienced rascal. Joe could not but see that he was wholly different from the father he had known all his life. But his face and figure and certain peculiarities of movement he had noticed often in his father were too apparent for the boy to doubt the man's identity. Besides, his companion called him Fletcher, and that seemed to settle the matter, anyway. This remarkable change in his father became more mystifying and astonishing to Joe the longer he reflected on it. While he was still pondering over the matter, Biggs reappeared.

"Now, young chap, you're going with us," he said to Joe. "Take one of his arms, Jimmy, and we'll lead him outside to the wagon."

Joe saw his father in the yard, walking impatiently up and down. It was his father's walk to a nicety. He was bundled into the wagon and found a long box in it, the cover of which had a number of auger holes at one end.

"Sit down near the back of the seat, with your back against the canvas side of the wagon," Biggs said to him.

Joe obeyed, for he couldn't help himself. Biggs then picked up a light-red woman's shawl and folded it around Joe's face just under the nose and around his chest. His object was to conceal the handkerchief gag and the fact that the boy's hands were bound.

"Now, then, look after him, Jimmy," he said, as he stepped on to the seat, half of which was already occupied by Fletcher, Sr.

Taking up the reins, Biggs started Jerry ahead, guiding him through an opening in the fence where the rails had apparently been removed to afford passage for the wagon. Across a hard and wintry-looking stubblefield the wagon jogged at a slow pace. Then they came to another lane. Biggs got down, removed a section of rails, returned to the wagon and drove through the lane. It was a long lane, with a farmhouse a short distance away, from the chimney of which the smoke rose and floated away on the wind.

Three children were playing in the yard, and they stopped to look at the wagon as it passed down to the road. Biggs got down again, opened the wide gate and shut it after Fletcher had driven through. With the reins in his hands once more, Biggs turned down the county road in a direction opposite to Clifton, which was about fifteen miles away. During the first part of the ride, from the house to the road, Joe's attention had been concentrated on the box in the wagon. That it contained plunder of some kind he was satisfied.

It was quite reasonable to conclude that his father and Biggs had not confined their energies wholly to lying in wait for the mail wagon. And before his father came to be identified with this crooked business some other man, whose place he had taken, had been on the ground, presumably with Biggs, for the mail route had been in trouble for at least two months to his knowledge. It is true he had not read in the Clifton papers of any house robberies having been committed in the neighborhood during that time, but it was quite possible they had been pulled off in or near Flushing, and that the report had escaped his attention. He wondered why the holes were in the cover, and finally concluded that they

happened to be there when the box came into the possession of his captors.

When the wagon reached the road he listened to the talk between his father and Biggs. From what passed between the men it was clear they had a job of plunder in contemplation, which they expected to pull off that night somewhere along the road. The conversation developed the following facts: Two brothers, both of whom were old and avaricious, one of them, indeed, being a miser, lived in that county, one at the extreme western end of the county road, the other at the eastern end of the road, a matter of thirty miles apart. They had not seen or communicated with each other for many years, but each was waiting for the other to die so he could come in possession of his property, neither of them ever having married.

The one in the western end of the county lived with an old housekeeper, but the brother at the eastern end, the miser, lived all alone, for he did not care to pay for the services and keep of a housekeeper. Both lived in old houses much out of repair, but the miser had a wall around his with spikes at the top and an iron gate, and he imagined that was sufficient protection, backed up with a navy revolver and a shotgun, to keep off thieves. Fletcher, Sr., it appeared, had written a letter to the miser, telling him that his brother had just died, and that he must come on immediately and secure his rights. If he delayed a minute the writer, who represented himself as his brother's lawyer, said the property would be lost to him, for his brother had made a will leaving it to his housekeeper and that will was now in a certain place where he, the miser, could find it and destroy it, but the writer intimated that he would have to be paid a certain sum to disclose the hiding place of the document.

This letter was to be delivered that afternoon by the red-headed boy, who was to represent himself as the lawyer's clerk, and he was to urge great haste on the part of the old miser if he hoped to secure his brother's property. The plotter expected that the miser would set out at once for his brother's home, which would leave his place unguarded for several hours. Jimmy was to offer to mind the house while he was away, and as soon as the miser had departed he was to admit Fletcher and Biggs to the house, which they would lose no time in searching, from cellar to roof, for the miser's money. It was a great scheme, and the plotter expected it would be a success. At that point a buggy with a man and a boy in it approached the wagon. When quite close, the boy shouted out:

"How do you do, Mr. Fletcher!"

Joe recognized the voice as belonging to his friend Dick Spencer.

CHAPTER X.—On the Eve of a Fresh Crime.

Joe saw his father nod in a careless sort of way. That wasn't the way he was in the habit of treating Dick. On the contrary, he always had been quite affable to his son's particular friend. Now he barely noticed him. Joe was sure Dick would notice the difference and wonder at it. As a matter of fact, Dick looked after the

wagon as he and his father passed in the buggy. He recognized it as the mail wagon, and was surprised to see somebody other than Joe driving it. He also wondered that the wagon should be on the county road so far from Clifton at that time and heading away from that town. It was then about one o'clock, and Joe had told him that he expected to get back from Flushing a little after eleven. So he supposed that Mr. Fletcher had borrowed the wagon for some special purpose and got a man to drive it for him while Joe, tired after his long morning trip, remained home.

Joe caught an indistinct glimpse of the buggy and its occupants out of the back of the wagon and saw Dick looking after them.

"He little knows that I am a prisoner in this wagon," he thought, "or that my father has undergone a most astonishing change, the end of which I shudder to figure on."

The buggy disappeared in the distance while the wagon went on its way. Half an hour later Biggs turned off into a branch road and reined in to one side, near the hedge. Fletcher got down and called the red-headed boy. Biggs took the youth's place as guard over the prisoner. Jimmy presently started off diagonally across a field, struck the county road a quarter of a mile from the branch road and, hustling forward, soon entered a village. He entered the village hotel and purchased some sandwiches, a whole pie and three bottles of ale. With the bundles in his arms he made his way back to the wagon.

Joe was ordered out of the wagon and taken behind the hedge by Biggs and the red-headed boy, while Mr. Fletcher remained in the wagon with half of the pie, two of the five sandwiches and two bottles of ale. The young mail contractor was unbound and relieved of his gag.

"Now don't try to get away or you'll get hurt," said Biggs, handing him a sandwich. "Eat that, and this piece of pie. It's all you'll get till after dark."

To show Joe that it would be highly dangerous for him to try to take French leave, Biggs drew out his revolver and laid it across his knees. He and Jimmy ate a sandwich between them and also a piece of pie the same size as that given Joe. They washed their repast down with alternate drinks of ale from the bottle. After they had reduced the bottle by two-thirds, Biggs offered the remainder of it to the young mail contractor, but the boy refused to partake of it. The pair then sat and watched Joe until they got a signal from the wagon. Then Joe was rebound and gagged as before and marched back to the vehicle.

Jerry looked somewhat appealingly at his new master as Joe was led past him, for he was hungry and missed his noon meal of oats. Joe could not do anything for him any more than he could do something for himself, so the horse went without his dinner, and as this was a most unusual experience for him, he doubtless wondered, in horse fashion, what it all meant. The two sandwiches, the half of the pie and the bottle of ale handed into the wagon to Mr. Fletcher had disappeared. Evidently the bank cashier had enjoyed more than a fair share of the provender. However, as he appeared to be the boss of the

outfit he probably considered himself entitled to the lion's share of the food.

At any rate, his two companions made no kick about the unequal division, and in a few minutes the wagon was in motion again, following the branch road at a slow pace. They only met and passed one vehicle, containing a farmer and his family out for a drive, and after a two hours' drive, pausing only once to water the horse, they came in sight of a house, surrounded by a stone wall, standing at the top of a little hill. The wagon drew up beside the hedge again, and Fletcher got out and called the carrot-headed youth down. In a few minutes Jimmy started up the road toward the house.

As time elapsed and he did not return, Fletcher took that as a favorable omen that his plot would succeed. And succeed it did. Old Huxley, the miser, was overcome with joy on reading the decoy note and finding that his brother was dead. He was much concerned, however, on discovering that his brother had made a will in favor of his housekeeper, but was somewhat reassured by what the lawyer said about it being temporarily hidden, and how, if he came on at once, he might, for a consideration, obtain and destroy it, thus enabling him, as heir-at-law, to claim all his late brother's property.

Bad as he craved his brother's goods, he balked at the idea of being obliged to give up to the lawyer, who he reckoned must be a great rascal to make him such an offer. Still he had to do it or lose all, so with a lot of growling he prepared to get ready for his journey to the other end of the county. He didn't like the idea of leaving his house alone, but decided to drive to the village beyond, first, and hire a constable to watch his place while he was away. Jimmy, however, offered to stay and look after the house, without charge. He assured the miser that he was a good, honest boy and wouldn't steal a penny if it was placed within his reach. He didn't say, however, that he wouldn't pinch a dollar bill, or as many of them as came conveniently within his reach. The idea of having his house watched for nothing by an honest boy appealed to old Huxley, who, though wealthy, hated to part with a cent, and he decided to take up with Jimmy's offer. As his money was carefully concealed in the house, he felt that it would be safe, anyway, so he got out his old horse and rickety buggy, and showing Jimmy where he could find some scraps of food for his supper, he started on his wild-goose trip in excellent spirits.

The old man and his rig passed the wagon where it was drawn up alongside the road, and, seeing nothing suspicious about it, went on his way, little suspecting that he was the victim of a clever brain. As soon as he was well out of sight, Jimmy came running down the road to announce that the coast was clear. The wagon was at once driven to the house, passed in through the iron gate and around to the yard behind the building. Joe was taken out of the wagon, walked into the barn and tied to a post. The gag was taken from his mouth and he was told he could shout as loud as he wanted to if he cared to do it.

That was a sign that his captors had no fear that he would be heard. Biggs remembered that the horse had had nothing to eat for many hours,

and they expected to make considerable use of his services before morning, he looked around the barn for some oats. Old Huxley did not feed his own nag in a princely fashion, as it didn't pay. Indeed, if it was absolutely necessary for him to keep the animal to ride to the village and back, the horse would quickly have ceased to be a steady boarder. As the animal was growing thinner every day on short commons, he would probably cease to be a boarder ere long on his own accord.

Biggs found a small bag half full of oats, and he gave it all to Jerry, whose eyes brightened and mouth watered at the prospect of an immediate feed. What Jerry got was intended to last the other horse two full days, and he made short work of it. While Biggs was looking after the horse, Fletcher and Jimmy were in the old house making a preliminary survey. Biggs joined them in a short time and the trio got down to business.

Joe, in the meanwhile, remained in the barn, triced up to the post. The moment he was left alone he began to consider how he could release himself. He judged that his father and his companions would remain some time in the house, hunting for the miser's wealth, for it was hardly likely they would discover it without considerable trouble. Doubtless they would take their time, for the miser would not get back till the next day at the quickest, and nobody ever visited at his house, since he discouraged callers.

Joe was a boy of pluck and energy. What his captors intended to do with him he could not guess, but he was satisfied they had carried him off to prevent him from putting justice on their track. His father had shown such a callous disregard for him since they had come together, not deigning even to notice him in the slightest way, that Joe was beginning to feel some resentment against him.

"I really don't know what to make of him. My idea about his being mentally unbalanced does not seem to jibe with his actions and talk. If my father had ever betrayed any crooked sentiments before, I might understand his sudden breaking out in this fashion, but he never has; that's why his present conduct is such a great mystery to me. If he goes on he will certainly land in jail somewhere. If he can be brought up with a round turn before he commits more crime his former nature might reassert itself and he would be saved."

While Joe was thinking thus he was not idle, but was working at his bonds trying to loosen them. He was greatly handicapped by the fact that his arms were tied behind his back independent of the strands that held him to the post. Nevertheless, he did his best to make his escape, and after half an hour's steady and persistent effort he worked one hand free. The rest was easy, for he had a knife in his pocket, and with that he cut the rest of the rope and stepped away from the post in full possession of his limbs.

Looking cautiously from the door of the barn, he saw no one in the yard. He started at once for the wagon to see if his revolver was still under the seat, where he kept it when not in use, on a shelf made out of an old cigar box. Climbing up on the front wheel, he shoved his hand under the seat. The revolver was there, for his captors had not thought of looking in such a place

for it. As he drew it out, a hollow groan, that filled the interior of the wagon, struck upon his ear. He started up in some consternation, wondering whence the gruesome sound came.

CHAPTER XI.—Joe's Escape.

The sound was not repeated, but, nevertheless, it was such a peculiar and weird noise that the young mail contractor stood a full minute on the footboard, with the revolver in his hand, figuring as to what had caused it. Realizing that it would not do for him to stand in that exposed situation, where he might easily be seen from one of the back windows if his captors happened to look out, he jumped down and retreated behind the barn to consider what move he should make next.

As he believed the box in the wagon contained stolen goods, he had some thought of leading his rig off the grounds into the road and then getting back to Clifton as fast as he could. The wagon and the horse were bound to make some noise, enough probably to attract the attention of his father and his companions, and they would rush out and cut off the vehicle and recapture him. It therefore behooved him to be careful what move he made. After a little thought he decided to venture into the house and see in what part of it his father and the other two were. This was a rather risky proceeding for him to undertake, for he was quite liable to be caught. Nevertheless, he resolved to do it. Perhaps he would find them so occupied with their hunt that he could turn the key of a room on them and thus be able to make off in the wagon. Peeping up at the rear windows to make sure that the red-headed boy was not on the watch, Joe crossed the yard to the back door, through which he judged his father and his companions had entered the building.

He found the door ajar, and that it led into the kitchen. He listened, but heard no sounds. Reassured, he kicked off his shoes and entered. An open door admitted him into what is called the butler's pantry, and another open door pointed the way to the dining room. Old Huxley never used this room, and a thick coating of dust lay on the floor, table and other furniture, for the miser did not consider it necessary to clean it up. The old man cooked and ate in the kitchen and passed the rest of the time upstairs in his sitting room, which connected with his bedroom. Joe did not enter the dining room, but, returning to the kitchen, passed out through a side door into an entry where a flight of stairs led to the second floor. The young mail contractor paused at the foot of the stairs and listened again. Hearing nothing, he mounted the stairs and reached a landing.

Four closed doors faced him, two on either side, and at the back a narrow staircase indicated how the top floor could be reached. An inspection of the two doors in front showed that one of them was ajar. It showed signs of having been forced by a jimmy which had split the door-jamb badly, and old Huxley was sure to have a fit when he saw it.

Joe pushed the door open, little by little, and

looked into the old man's sitting room. No one was there at that moment. The open door communicating with the miser's bedroom suggested that the trio might be in there, so the boy slipped over to it and listened. He heard voices in the room, which settled the question.

"Now, then, Biggs, get a purchase on the corner and we'll have it open in a jiffy," said Fletcher. "This is surely where the old man keeps his hoard. It isn't a good thing for the country to have money lying around idle, so we'll circulate it for him," he added, with a chuckle.

"You can gamble on it we'll circulate it," said Biggs. "Here, Jimmy, give me a hand with this."

Joe's curiosity induced him to peek into the room. He saw the three, with their coats off, crouching on the floor with their backs to him, busily employed in opening a trapdoor in the floor, which gave them a good deal of trouble, owing to the fact that it fitted as tight as wax, and their implements were not suited to overcome the difficulty quickly. As Joe watched them his eyes lighted on his father's coat, which lay on the marble-top table. A carefully wrapped package stuck out of one of the inside pockets. Instantly it occurred to the boy that that package held the bonds belonging to the bank.

"If I could get possession of it, lock the door on them and escape, I'd make a ten-strike. Whether my father intended to defraud the bank of them or not, when he took them away, their return intact will save him from the consequences of that crime, at any rate."

That thought decided Joe to take the risk of entering the room. First, however, he looked at the door to see if there was a key on the outside of the lock. There was. It was a great risk he was taking, but a great deal hinged on the result if he was successful. Cautiously, hardly daring to breathe, he advanced into the room. The trio were so intent on getting at the miser's hoard that they did not think of anything else in their vicinity. Joe got within arm's length of his father's coat and seized the protruding end of the package. Instead of sliding out of the pocket, as he expected it would, it stuck. He jerked it slightly, but with no result. It was caught in some way and would not come. Then Joe resolved to take the coat itself. He lifted it from the table, without attracting notice, and retreated to the door. Closing the door, he softly turned the key and glided downstairs.

Reaching the kitchen, he found that the package was caught by a tear in the coat. He got it out and looked at it. His heart gave a leap of satisfaction when he saw that it bore the stamp of the bank and was directed to the Chester Bank.

"It's the bonds!" he breathed.

Putting his hand in the opposite pocket he found a wallet containing a pile of bills, mostly \$1, \$2 and \$5.

"I'll bet that is the money, or the bulk of it, stolen from the registered letters. I'll take charge of it," he said.

In an outside pocket was a bunch of money-orders. They were worthless to anybody but the people to whose order they had been drawn, and Joe wondered that his father should have car-

ried them around with him. In another pocket was a letter, which had passed through the mail, addressed to Edward Fletcher, Esq., Clifton Bank, Clifton, Mich. Joe was about to return it when he heard a pounding and banging upstairs. Fletcher and his companion had discovered they were locked in, a fact that occasioned them surprise and some consternation, and were trying to force their way out. Joe realized that it was time for him to be off. Instead of putting the letter back in the coat, he dropped the coat on the floor and shoved the letter in his pocket. Putting on his shoes, he dashed over to the wagon, got on the seat and started for the iron gate, which was closed. Looking up at the second-story front windows he saw the red-headed boy looking out. When Jimmy saw the wagon making for the gate he gave the alarm. Fletcher rushed to the window and looked out. He shook his fist after the wagon and threw one leg out of the window as if he meant to drop to the ground. Then he saw that the porch came up to the next window, and calling on Biggs he rushed to that window, threw it up, got down on the porch and, leaping to the ground, ran for the mail-wagon.

Joe was then in the act of opening the gate, and he saw that his father would be up with him in a moment. He sprang on the seat and, lashing Jerry with the end of the reins, shouted: "Get up! Get up!" Fletcher was so close to the rear of the vehicle that he made a leap to get in. The sudden moving forward of the wagon caused him to miss his mark and he fell on all fours on the ground. The wagon rolled through the gate and Joe turned Jerry in the direction of the county road. Fletcher got on his feet, boiling with rage.

He drew his revolver and discharged it after the young mail contractor, and his aim was so good that the bullet went through the top of the boy's soft hat, missing his skull by a quarter of a ninch. A second shot followed, but it went wide of its mark. Biggs, who by this time had reached the gate, added his fire to his companion's, and for a few moments Joe was in great peril of his life. He escaped, however, by lashing the surprised Jerry into a dead run, and soon the miser's house was left well in the rear, and the dangerous trio with it.

CHAPTER XII.—Speculation Concerning Joe.

Joe soon reached the county road and turned to the left toward Clifton. It was six o'clock by this time and he had a long ride before him. Not only that, but he was mighty hungry, for the single sandwich and small piece of pie his captors had treated him to had only temporarily taken the edge off his appetite. He judged he had a good twenty-five mile trip ahead of him, which would probably take him four hours to cover. That meant the loss of the whole of his Sunday evening, as well as the afternoon, which was now gone. Well, he didn't care. His morning misfortune had resulted in a great coup. He had recovered the \$10,000 worth of bonds carried off by his father and would have the satis-

faction of returning them to Mr. Haywood. He had also recovered the bulk of the money stolen from the registered mail, and probably all of the money-orders. He pulled out the latter and looked them over. From the date on two-thirds of them he felt sure they were a part of the mail lost by Jud Hopkins. He might reasonably presume, then, that a part of the money came out of registered letters carried by Hopkins on the night he had been attacked and cleaned out of everything, including the express packages. He judged that the express plunder was in the long box in the wagon along with other plunder.

"I think I've done pretty well, considering the perilous experience I've been through last night and to-day," he thought. "If it wasn't that my father is implicated in all this I'd consider I was entitled to some reward. The only reward I'll ask of Mr. Haywood is consideration for my father. I'll request him to hide the fact that he had anything to do with the bonds. I have no doubt he will be willing to agree to that, for he always thought a great deal of my father. The robbing of the mail is a different matter entirely. The Government is not likely to let up on post-office thieves. While the postmaster might think I was entitled to some reward for recovering the money and orders stolen, their recovery will not affect the status of the guilty persons."

So Joe argued to himself as he drove along, unaware that two Government detectives were in pursuit of the mail-wagon. He would not encounter them, because they were in the village beyond the branch road on which old Huxley lived when he made his thrilling escape. How they happened to be after the wagon was this: Ted Barclay, the postmaster's son, waited up to the last moment for Joe to arrive with the mail-bags that morning from Flushing. Joe had told him he expected to reach the post-office a little after eleven. Noon arrived without Joe and Ted wondered what delayed him. At a quarter-past eleven he was obliged to close the mail-bags going East by the 12.30 express, which was the only train that passed eastward on Sunday afternoon. The next train was the usual daily 6.20 p. m. Joe's mail would have to wait for that, at least such part of it as was bound for the East, so Ted loaded his bags on the cart, closed the office and went to the station. The mail-bags thrown off at Clifton he carried back to the office and then went home to dinner, where he notified his father of Joe's non-arrival.

"I hope he hasn't got into trouble, like the others," said the postmaster. "You will have to return to the office and wait for him."

Ted went back after eating his dinner, but Joe was not waiting for him. Mr. Barclay, who was interested in the arrival of Joe, came to the office shortly after his son. When he found that the young mail contractor had not showed up yet he went to the Western Union office and sent a message to the Flushing postmaster, asking what time Joe had left his office. In half an hour he received a reply which stated that the boy had left shortly after seven that morning. Mr. Barclay at once sent his son to look up the Government detective who was in charge of the Jud Hopkins case. Ted had hardly left when a buggy containing Dick Spencer and his father drove up,

and seeing the postmaster standing out in front of the post-office, Dick said:

"What time did Joe Fletcher arrive this morning?"

"He hasn't arrived yet," replied the postmaster. "It's three o'clock and he's about three hours behind time. We are afraid something has happened to the wagon."

"Why, we passed the mail-wagon two hours ago, fifteen or more miles from here, going east along the county road."

"You did!" exclaimed the astonished postmaster.

"We did. Joe wasn't on the wagon, as far as I could see, but his father was, and a strange man was driving."

"Well, it's mighty funny. Joe Fletcher left Flushing with the mail-bags at seven this morning. I've got a dispatch from the postmaster to that effect. He has not delivered the bags here, as he should have done not later than noon. Now you tell me you saw the wagon driving east along the county road, fifteen miles from here, and that was two hours ago."

"That's right," said Dick. "There couldn't be anything wrong, because Joe's father was on the wagon seat."

So Dick and his father drove to the cottage, and Dick went in. He found Doris all up in the air over her brother's failure to get home by noon.

"Joe hasn't come home yet," she said, in answer to Dick's inquiry, "and I don't know why he hasn't. I'm greatly worried about him."

Dick was rather staggered at this.

"When did your father leave the house?" he asked.

"My father!" exclaimed Doris, in surprise at the question from Dick. "He hasn't been home since Friday night."

"He hasn't? Well, I met and spoke to him about one o'clock to-day on the county road, fifteen miles from here."

"You did?"

"Yes. And he was seated in Joe's mail-wagon. I supposed Joe had loaned him the rig after he got back."

"Then something has happened to Joe on the road last night. Perhaps he has been murdered."

"No. He reached Flushing all right."

"How do you know?"

"The postmaster told father and me that he had a telegraphic message from the Flushing postmaster to the effect that Joe left that place at seven this morning with the mail-bags."

"Then something has happened to him on the road this morning."

"Well, it's mighty funny," said Dick, using the postmaster's expression.

"Oh, dear! what shall I do? Father's away and now Joe is——"

She burst into tears. Dick comforted her as well as he could, telling her not to worry as Joe would surely turn up before long with a full explanation.

Doris didn't know what to make of it, and said so.

"Well, father, who is outside in the buggy waiting for me, and we are going back to the postoffice to report what I have learned here. Doubtless he will take the matter right in hand,

and send somebody out on the Flushing road to look for Joe, or along the county road after the wagon—perhaps both."

Telling Doris to cheer up, Dick left, telling her he would be back later to see if his friend had turned up. When Dick and his father got back to the post-office they found two men talking to the postmaster. One was a secret service agent, and the other his assistant. Dick reported that Joe had not been at the cottage.

"Then more crooked work has been pulled off," said Mr. Barclay. "The Flushing route will turn my hair gray, I'm afraid. You'd better chase the mail-wagon," to the detectives. "It is four o'clock, nearly, and was fifteen miles from here at one. You will have to do some hustling."

CHAPTER XIII.—Joe Gets Home at Last.

It was a long and tiresome trip to Joe, that ride back to Clifton in the gloom of the night. Poor old Jerry was fagged out, and his gait grew slower and slower, as the hours passed, but he never ceased to keep up a semblance of his customary jog-trot. Many vehicles passed them going in both directions, but Joe took no notice of their occupants, and it was probable that they took as little notice of him. At last the outskirts of Clifton was reached and Joe halted at a trough to give his animal a drink. The water refreshed the horse somewhat and he started on again at a livelier trot. Joe's watch told him it was eleven o'clock when he struck the street on which he lived. A little way further and he drove into the yard. A light was burning in the living-room, but the rest of the cottage was dark.

At that moment the kitchen door opened.

"Joe, Joe, is that you?" came in plaintive tones.

"Yes, Dorie, I'm back all right at last. Did you think I never was coming?"

Doris gave a cry of joy and rushed out into the yard and the next moment was sobbing hysterically in her brother's arms.

"Oh, Joe, Joe, where have you been? Are you all right?"

"I've been a long distance from here, up the county road. I'm all right, and it was father and his pals who kept me away," replied Joe.

"Father and his pals! What do you mean?"

"I'll tell you when we go in the house. I've got to look after Jerry first. Poor old fellow, he's nearly dead. Have you got something ready for me to eat? I'm half starved. I've had nothing since six this morning except one sandwich and a small piece of pie around two o'clock."

"Your dinner is in the oven. I've been keeping it warm since half-past twelve. I'm afraid the meat is dried up."

Joe took Jerry out of the traces, led him into his stall and put a good mess of oats under his nose.

"There, eat that, old man. I'll be back by and by to see how you're getting on."

He hurried into the house and took his seat at the table with his sister.

"You don't know how worried and frightened I've been about you. I was sure you had been

murdered. The stories the papers printed about the experiences of the other contractors who threw up the job came rushing into my mind, and nearly made me crazy. Then Dick Spencer called."

"Did he?"

"Yes. And he told a curious story about passing your wagon on the county road, fifteen miles from here. He said the wagon was going east, and that father was on the seat with a strange driver, and he did not see you at all."

"I was in the wagon, just the same, when Dick passed, but I was gagged and bound."

"Gagged and bound!" almost screamed Doris. "And father there with you?"

"Yes."

"Then he certainly must be crazy, as you said you believed he was."

"There was too much method in his conduct for him to be mad—and yet, oh, Dorie, sister, it is awful to think of father as a criminal."

"A criminal—brother!" gasped the girl, turning white.

"Yes, sis, a criminal for that is what he is, whether he knows what he is doing or not."

"Oh, Joe!" said Doris, bursting into tears.

"Don't cry, sister, dear. I feel bad enough, heaven knows, without seeing you grieved to death. Never told you of my experience the first night I took the route—I have told nobody. It was too dreadful!"

"Too dreadful!"

"Listen! Fifteen miles down the Flushing road, where it takes a turn, and in a bad spot, two men sprang out of the bushes and their actions showed their purpose was to attack me and rob the mail-wagon. Something, I know not what, had warned me a few minutes before, and I rigged up a dummy on the seat. Then I jumped out of the wagon and was trotting behind when the men appeared. I grabbed the registered mail-bag and struck one of them down. Picking up the lantern and revolver he dropped, I turned the light on the other. What was my consternation when I recognized father."

"Joe!" fluttered Doris.

"I knew him in a moment. How could I mistake him? It was his face, his form, his very clothes. He glared at me like a savage, drew a pistol and would have shot me down, but at that moment a buggy appeared, then he and his companion fled into the bushes and were gone."

Doris sobbed.

"Friday night nothing happened, but last night I was attacked again by father and the same man, and I only beat them off by firing at them."

"You fired at father?"

"Not to hit him, and he and his pal fired at me, and I had a narrow escape. I got away from them and reached Flushing all right. This morning I started back. In the daylight I did not expect trouble, but I got it, for it is the unexpected that always happens."

Joe then went on to tell how the red-headed boy had got into the wagon and asked for a ride, and how, at the turn of the road, just where the first attack had been made, the boy seized and held him until his father and Biggs got in and made him their prisoner. He related how they had driven the wagon to the deserted house where they cut open the mail-pouches and went

through the letters for money. Then he told how, after taking into the wagon a long box, which was still in the vehicle, and which he was confident held plunder, they had put him into it, bound and gagged, and started across a field and down a lane till they came out on the county road, many miles east of Clifton. He told her how his father had gone over his plan for enticing a miser named Huxley from his home and robbing the place as soon as the old man was out of the way. He told how they had gone close to the miser's house, sent the red-headed boy forward with a note to deliver to Huxley, and awaited results.

He told all that followed and frightened his sister with the narrative of his escape under fire.

"Oh, brother, we'll be disgraced. I never will be able to hold up my head after that," sobbed Doris.

It took some time to calm her, and when he had done so he went outside to see how old Jerry was getting on. He found the horse all right. Joe gave him a drink of water and then locked him up for the night. He was passing around the rear of the wagon when, for the second time, that dismal, hollow groan came to his ears from the interior of the wagon.

CHAPTER XIV.—Conclusion.

"My gracious! what was that?" Joe exclaimed, starting back, for the sound seemed particularly weird at that hour of the night, in the silence of the yard.

He unlocked the barn door, took one of his lanterns from the nail on which it was suspended, lighted it and returned to the wagon. Springing into the vehicle, he pounded on the box.

"Is there somebody in this box?" he asked.

A groan came back to him, and the sound clearly came through the auger holes in the cover. Joe flashed the light along one side of the box and saw that the cover was held down by two padlocks. Leaving the light in the wagon, he re-entered the barn and got a hammer and cold-chisel. A few vigorous blows loosened the staple, and hasp and lock were freed. Then he applied himself to the other one and speedily demolished that. Seizing the cover, he threw it up and beheld a man lying in the box. Lifting the lantern, he flashed the light on the man's face and received the surprise of his life. He was staggered by amazement and consternation, for it was his father he gazed upon, though he had left his father five hours before at the gate of the miser's house, all of twenty miles away. How then could this be his father? At that moment the man in the box put his hands on the side of it and, after some effort, rose up in a sitting posture.

"Joe, is that really you?" he said, in a hollow voice.

The voice and the manner of addressing him were so natural to the boy that Joe instinctively felt that this was his father beyond a doubt.

"Father, is that you—your true self?" he asked. "Who is the man I have mistaken for you? Who looks so like you that I took him for you? Explain the mystery."

"You have seen him?" cried his father.

"Seen him? I should say I have, and been up against him several times at the risk of my life. Why, I was a prisoner in his hands nearly all day, and only made my escape by the skin of my teeth late this afternoon. Didn't you hear pistol shots some hours ago when this wagon started off with a rush?"

"Yes, I recall that I did."

"Those shots were fired at me by the man who is as like you as one pea to another, and his companion, whom he called Biggs."

"How came you to be in his hands?" asked his father.

"It is too long a story to tell you here. You look ill and bad, father. I am sure you have suffered terribly since you disappeared from your home and the bank."

His father groaned.

"Don't mention the bank," he said, in heart-broken accents. "I am ruined there. The \$10,000 package of bonds I am responsible for are lost to me forever."

"Don't worry about the bonds, father. I've recovered them."

"You have!" cried Mr. Fletcher, gazing at him, incredulously.

"Yes. Here is the package," and Joe took it out of his pocket and showed it.

"Yes, yes, it's the package, and it has not been tampered with. Thank heaven! I am saved—saved!" he cried.

"Now, father, tell me who is that man—your living likeness?"

"I hate to confess the truth, Joe. He is my twin brother."

"I can well believe that, father. But where has he been all these years?"

"Where—in the State prison. He committed a murder years ago—killed the man who cut him out in a love affair, and he was sentenced for life. He, with the man Biggs, made their escape two months or more ago and came out here to Michigan to compel me to furnish means for their escape to Europe by the way of Canada. I would willingly have done the best I could for him, for I cannot forget that he is my own flesh and blood, and when I met him in secret I promised to help him. But he took a gross advantage of my brotherly affection and aimed to effect my ruin the moment the chance came in his way. He has proved himself to be utterly without a conscience, and now whatever happens to him will be on his own head. But I cannot understand how you came to meet him unless he decoyed you into his power for some purpose I cannot conceive of."

"You shall know all presently, father. Let me help you into the house, where Doris is worried almost to death over the mystery of your absence."

Joe led him into the cottage, where Doris fell on his neck with surprise and joy. Both she and Joe hastened to put a warm supper before him, and this braced him up wonderfully. Then he told his story. As he was leaving the bank on Thursday afternoon with the package of bonds he was accosted by Biggs, who was waiting for him. The man told him that his brother was waiting in a certain place to see him and would detain him but a few minutes. The ren-

dezvous proved to be a tenantless cottage, a fact that occasioned the cashier no surprise, under the circumstances. When Richard Fletcher, the black sheep, learned that his brother had \$10,000 worth of bonds on his person which he was about to take to Chester by the 6.20 train he determined to get possession of the package. With the help of Biggs he bound and gagged his brother and after dark carried him to their secret rendezvous, the old farmhouse where Joe had been taken to that morning, and where their companion, Jimmy, was in hiding. Richard Fletcher then told his brother he intended to hold him prisoner until he had pulled off a certain job he had in mind, namely, the old Huxley matter, after which he would be released and they would make their escape via Canada.

That was practically the whole of Edward Fletcher's story. Joe then told his story, which hinged on the mail contract he had secured without his father's knowledge, relating the attacks made on his wagon, his perilous escapes and finally his capture that morning. Next morning Mr. Fletcher called at Mr. Haywood's house and told his story, handing over the package of bonds and giving his son credit for their recovery. Needless to say that the banker sympathized with him and assured him that everything was all right between them. Joe, in the meanwhile, went to the post-office, told his astonishing story and restored the money and money-orders, for which he received great credit, and ultimately a reward from the Government.

He and Ted Barclay went to the old farmhouse that morning and recovered the ordinary letters and damaged pouches. After that Joe experienced no more trouble on the Flushing route, and at the end of his contract it was renewed at a higher rate. As for Richard Fletcher, Biggs and Jimmy, they failed to find the miser's wealth and were caught taking a boat to Canada. They were returned to prison whence they had made their escape, and where in time the rascally twin brother died. Ultimately, Joe Fletcher made a good thing out of the Flushing route, establishing a regular express business between the two towns, the profits of which paid him handsomely, in connection with the mail, in the delivery of which he was always on time.

Next week's issue will contain "THE MISSING BONDS; OR, A LUCKY BOY IN WALL STREET."

NEW VALUABLE CLAY.

A clay valuable as a material for giving finish and printing qualities to paper has been found by the Forest Products Laboratory of the Department of Agriculture. Previous to the discovery made by the laboratory at Madison, Wis., this highly colloidal clay, found in large deposits in the Rocky Mountain region, has had little known use except as an excellent substitute for soap. In the past all the best clay used for loading paper has been imported. Experiments with the American clay from the West show that when this clay is added to the English china clay generally used the paper produced has a superior finish and appearance and a more velvety feel than where the English clay only is used.

CURRENT NEWS

LIGHTNING FREAK.

Lightning is apt to do anything which is irregular. It struck a Dickenson College dormitory and hurled a freshman seven feet across a room while others a few feet away were not touched.

TRAINED PAIR OF GEESE.

Two geese trained to fish and bring the catch to their master have been keeping the table of J. T. Kerr supplied with fish. Mr. Kerr lives on the banks of the Mississippi River. "The geese already knew how to swim and dive," said Mr. Kerr, "and all that was necessary was to teach them to catch the fish and bring them in." Mr. Kerr said he conceived the idea of training the geese to fish after Col. Tucker Gibson, a neighboring planter, trained a hog to hunt. The hog noses through the bushes and "points" covies of quail exactly after the fashion of the best bred bird dog.

GOATS TO KILL SASSAFRAS.

One hundred and fifty Angora goats were received yesterday at Hartwell, Ind., in this county, by the Hartwell Mining Company. The goats were bought in Kansas City to be turned loose on the property of the mining company, consisting of several thousand acres of coal land in Southern Pike County, much of which is growing sassafras, small sprouts and trees. The goats will be pastured on the property in an effort to kill the sprouts and sassafras. Hundreds of acres of this land can be reclaimed if it can be cleared without too great an expense to the mining company, and the goats were obtained to do the work of men in the clearing.

MOUSE TOOK \$50 BILL.

It was nothing new to the man sent by a music house to tune a piano in an Altoona, Pa., home to discover a mouse's nest under the keyboard. That was an old story to him; but when he noticed tiny bits of green paper his curiosity was aroused. He fished out the nest and found it was a greenback, somewhat trayed around the edges. He called the woman of the house and gave it to her.

"Well, that's where our \$50 bill went," she gasped. Then she explained that last fall her husband had slipped the bill under the parlor carpet for safe keeping. Seven weeks ago they needed it, but it was gone. The mouse had utilized it.

A GAS ATTACK ON DESTRUCTIVE BUGS.

The deadly fumes of hydrocyanic acid gas are used in eradicating objectionable bugs and fungi from citrus fruit trees. As a couple of whiffs of this gas spell sure death to the workmen, great care has to be exercised in treating the trees. A graduated scale is so painted on the out-

side of the canvas bag that is employed for the administering of the gas, and that forms the subject of the accompanying view, as to indicate how much gas is required for any given tree. As the canvas bag is placed over a tree, the graduated scale indicates the size of the tree; and by subsequent reference to the poison record on the automatic engine which makes and distributes the gas, the attendant can accurately determine exactly how much poison gas to give each tree. The treatment occurs in the late afternoon and the canvas bag is wrapped around each tree in turn for a period of forty minutes, which is considered ample time to gas the undesirable bugs and growth.

VOLCANOES IN AN AMERICAN PARK.

The Hawaiian National Park, just created by Congress, is the first national park lying outside the continental boundaries of the United States. It sets apart three celebrated Hawaiian volcanoes, Kilauea, Mauna Loa and Haleakala.

"The Hawaiian volcanoes," writes T. A. Jagger, director of the Hawaiian Volcano Observatory, "are truly a national asset, wholly unique of their kind, and the most continuously, variously and harmlessly active volcanoes on earth. Kilauea crater has been nearly continuously active with a lake or lakes of molten lava for a century. Mauna Loa is the largest active volcano and mountain pass in the world, with eruptions about once a decade, and has poured out more lava during the last century than any other volcano on the globe. Haleakala is a crater rift in its summit eight miles in diameter and 3,000 feet deep, with many high lava cones built up inside the crater. It is probably the largest of all known craters among volcanoes that are known as active. Haleakala erupted less than 200 years ago. The crater at sunrise is the grandest volcanic spectacle on earth."

The lava lake at Kilauea is the main feature of the new national park. It draws visitors from all over the world. It is a lake of fire 1,000 feet long, splashing on its banks with a noise like waves of the sea, while great fountains boil through it fifty feet high, sending quantities of glowing spray over the shore. Gases hiss and rumble and blue flames play through crevasses.

There have been occasional crises, Mr. Jagger recently testified before the House Committee on the Public Lands, when the active crater was upheaved into a hill and thereafter collapsed into a deep pit with marvelously spectacular avalanches and fiery grottoes, cascades, whirlpools and rapids of glowing metal were common.

Mauna Loa is capped with perpetual snow. It is two and a half miles high.

Around the base of these vast volcanoes are gorgeous tropical forests. Sandalwood, elsewhere extinct, grows there luxuriously. There are mahogany groves, forests of tree ferns forty feet high, and magnificent tropical jungles alternating with green meadows. There are also tracts of desert and wonderful lavo caves.

A Lawyer At Nineteen

—OR—

FIGHTING AGAINST A FRAUD

By GASTON GARNE

(A Serial Story)

CHAPTER XVI.

Lew Leads a Raid, But In Spite of Hopeful Appearances Madge Is Not Found.

He ran up the steps of the house at the head of the men, and as he did so the front door opened and a girl came out with a pail of water in one hand and a mop in the other.

Lew caught her by the arm.

"Where's that young girl who was brought here late last night?" he asked her, giving her a shake in his excitement.

The girl screamed when she saw the policemen behind Lew, dropped the pail and the mop and fainted.

Lew bounded into the hallway and heard voices coming from the rooms below, and at once rushed to the basement stairs.

Down he went, two at a time, and the sergeant, only waiting to place a man at the doorway and one at the rear of the hall and one at the foot of the flight of stairs that led above, followed him with the rest of the men.

Lew reached the bottom of the flight, and then ran to the front basement room, from which he heard voices proceeding, and rushed into an apartment where two men had been seated at a table playing cards. They had just arisen, and one of them made a quick dash for the door that led into the kitchen.

Lew was after him like a shot.

It had flashed through Lew's mind that the man was rushing away to either give warning to others in the house or to effect the removal of Madge, and he was resolved that the fellow should not escape. He darted after him at top speed, and in a moment was behind him.

He did not want to knock the man senseless, for he meant to question him, so when he was fairly upon him the young lawyer struck him on the side of the head, and sent him spinning against the wall.

The fellow was dazed and came near falling, but Lew caught him by the arm and held him up, and at that instant the police poured into the room and some of them secured the other man, while the rest rushed to where Lew was standing.

The man Lew held gazed in seeming surprise at them.

"What's all this about?" he asked.

"It's about a young girl who was abducted, and who is concealed here in this house," spoke Lew. "Where is she?"

"I don't know what you're talking about," said the man.

"You can't save yourself by lying," sternly said the young lawyer. "Where were you running to when I caught you?"

"I was trying to get away."

"I know you were, but where to?"

"Anywhere. I'd been playing cards, and when I saw the police coming to the gate it struck me that somebody had seen the card playing, reported this as a gambling house and that we were being raided."

"That's a likely story. You'll have to think up a better yarn than that if you want to keep out of jail."

"Do you mean that you'll arrest me?"

"Yes."

"What for?"

The young lawyer recognized the question as a very shrewd one, for, as a matter of fact, no charge could be made against the man except that of being a suspicious character, and that would only mean temporary detention, which must be followed by speedy release.

However, he thought it just as well to assume a knowledge he did not possess, and with a threatening glance, he said:

"When you are standing trial for abduction you will find out what you are arrested for, and then, perhaps, you'll regret that you didn't open your mouth when you had a chance to save yourself."

But the man looked him coolly in the face.

"You're talking riddles to me," he said. "Go right ahead and amuse yourself, young man."

"Let's search the house," suggested the sergeant, and leaving the two prisoners in the care of two officers the sergeant led the others up the stairs in a search for the missing girl. The parlor floor was quickly examined and nothing found there, and then they descended to the next floor.

There they threw open the door of a bedroom and saw a middle-aged woman with a cloth tied around her head, busily making a bed. That she was taken by surprise was plainly evident by the expression on her face when she caught sight of the bluecoats in the doorway.

"What's this mean?" she demanded.

"Who are you?" asked the sergeant.

"I'm Mrs. French. This is a boarding house, and a respectable one, too, and I want to know what you want here?"

"We're looking for a young girl who was abducted and brought here, and who is concealed here now."

"I keep only male boarders. There's no female in this house except myself, and the sooner you satisfy yourself of the fact and get out the better I shall like it."

"We'll get out when we have searched your house from the cellar to the roof," said the sergeant, "and you may as well save our time and your credit and tell us where the girl is, madam."

"I'd tell you if I knew," said Mrs. French, and then went on making the bed with such an air of unconcern that Lew felt that the chance of finding Madge in the house was very small, indeed.

(To be continued.)

THE NEWS IN SHORT ARTICLES

BEACH CENSORS SEW UP GAPS IN BATHING SUITS.

Seamstresses with pins, needles, thread and other paraphernalia were stationed at Chicago beaches to censor the bathing suits worn by women and sew in those wearers who violated prohibitions against the display of legs and shoulders which were made effective this year.

Last year the style of beach costumes was left almost entirely to the conscience of the wearer.

Hundreds of women who appeared to-day in last year's "conscience" suits kept the beach tailoress-censors busy.

NEW ARTESIAN WELL ON A RAMPAGE.

The great Bear Butts artesian well, struck a short distance north of the Black Hills, South Dakota, has developed into what is believed to be the greatest artesian well on the American continent. This immense spouter now is running wild, and strenuous efforts are being made to control it. This must be done by capping it, which will be difficult.

When the flow of water was first struck it flowed at the rate of 50,000 barrels a day. Recent measurements show the flow is now more than 100,000 barrels a day. It is on a real rampage. The water is cutting deep fissures in the eighty-acre field, where the well is located, and the owner of the land fears the land will be ruined.

AMUNDSEN IN NOME ON WAY TO SEATTLE.

Roald Amundsen, the explorer, whose ship, the *Maude*, wintered off Cape Serge, Siberia, arrived in Nome June 18, and will leave for Seattle on the first steamer, he announced. The *Maude* lost a propeller in the ice during the winter and will be towed to Seattle this summer for repairs.

The explorer, noted for his discovery of the South Pole and his many Arctic and Antarctic voyages said he would continue his efforts to reach the North Pole by drifting with Arctic ice floes as soon as repairs to his vessel were completed. He spent the winter on board the *Maude*, with one native and three white companions, and said the party experienced few hardships. With the explorer were the daughter of Charles Carpenter, a Siberian trader, and a Chuchuk Eskimo girl, whom he will send to school in Norway.

TELLS OF TREASURE CAVE.

Application has been made to the Mexican Government by Adam Fisher of San Antonio, Tex., for a concession to remove gold and silver bars and Spanish silver dollars to the value of approximately \$73,000,000 from a cave, situated in Saddle Mountain, which overlooks Monterey.

Fisher says he discovered this hidden treasure recently after a search which covered several years. He asserts that he was led to take up the search by the discovery of an ancient document among the Government archives at Saltillo, which showed that in 1810 a great fortune in gold and silver was hidden in Cavallo Blanco by Government officials during a revolution.

Fisher says he counted the bullion and money when he discovered the hoard, and it consisted of 8,646 gold bars, 4,560 silver bars and 7,500,000 octagonal Spanish silver pieces.

OPERATOR BLIND.

Eighteen years ago Harry K. Ronne, telegraph operator, Lushton, Neb., went blind as the result of paralysis of the optic nerve, and later lost the use of his lower limbs. Determined not to be a charge upon the community he attended the State Institute for the Blind, and since then has married a girl whom he has never seen, and is the father of a six-year-old son.

At the present time he is in charge of the local exchange of the Lincoln Telephone Company. He is pronounced one of the best operators in the company's employ. Under the direction of his wife he learned the mysteries of the switchboard. He operates it by sound entirely. His sense of hearing is so acute that he can distinguish between the rings of all of the several hundred subscribers, the buzzes and other sounds, and seldom makes an error. He does the work as rapidly as a person with sight.

His wife attends to the commercial affairs of the office.

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Chased By Wolves.

By ALEXANDER ARMSTRONG.

"Tell us a story, grandpa."

It was a youngster who spoke, and as the words fell from his lips he came forward with a chair and seated himself by the side of a little old man, with a kind expression, whose hair and beard were of snowy whiteness.

"Oh, yes, grandpa; please do," cried two or three flaxen-haired urchins, as they eagerly shoved their chairs up before the hearth. "Tell us about the bears and wolves, that used to be so numerous when you and grandma first moved into the big woods."

"No, grandpa; tell us about the panther that you shot in the alder thicket," put in a black-eyed boy of some twelve years. "I think that story's just boss."

"I think the story about the old Indian man is the best," said a kind little girl of some ten summers, as she placed her hand upon the aged man's knee and looked up into his face. "You'll tell us that one, won't you, grandpa?"

The old man arose and placed a couple of sticks of wood on the fire in the good old New England fireplace, and then went to the front window and gazed forth into the darkness. It was a night of storm and gloom, and the howling wind shook the windows spitefully.

"Well, boys and girls," said he, coming back and resuming his seat, "to-night carries my mind back to the time when we passed such a terrible night in the forest."

Little Mary climbed up into the old man's lap, and with an anxious group of young listeners around him, he told the story.

"We had been in the wilderness nearly three years, and we had a good log house, a log barn, or rather a hovel, as we called it, and a clearing of some twenty acres. One afternoon in mid-winter, father requested me and James to go over to neighbor Belcher's and get a quarter of venison that he had left there the day before. 'And mind you, boys,' he said, 'you must be back before sundown. This is imperative.'"

"We promised obedience, and with light hearts hurried away.

"The distance to Mr. Belcher's was about two miles, over a rough log-road, and nearly all the way through the woods. But to hardy frontier boys of fourteen and sixteen years of age this was nothing; and at an early hour we arrived at Belcher's cabin, where we were kindly received by the family, and soon engaged in sport with the Belcher boys, riding down hill, chasing each other across the lots, and visiting their traps and snares.

"Time passed rapidly as it always does in such times, and in the fullness of our joys we thought not of returning until nearly night, when the loud roaring of the wind among the trees on the hill, and the angry whirling of a few feathery flakes of snow warned us of an approaching squall.

"Hurriedly we repaired to the house, and wrapping up the venison in a clean cloth that we had brought with us, we started homeward.

"'Boys,' said Mrs. Belcher, coming to the door, 'you had better stay with us to-night. It's going to snow, and the wolves may catch you in the dark before you get home.'"

"'No, thank you, Mrs. Belcher,' said I. 'Father commanded us to be back before sunset, and it must be that time now. How thoughtless we have been that we did not start sooner.'"

"'But it's dangerous, boys,' she expostulated. 'The wolves may devour you. Stay with us and start early in the morning.'"

"She could not induce us to stay, however, for our guilty consciences were inwardly reproaching us for staying so long already.

"What would our kind parents say when night came on and we did not return?"

"'Pshaw,' said James, who was some two years older than I, 'the wolves won't trouble us,' and without more words we started into a brisk trot.

"Already it was dusky in the thick woods, and soon the snow commenced to fall very fast.

"We had reached the top of a high wooded ridge, over which the path wound, and were plodding along, facing the storm blast, when a low, dismal howl greeted our ears from the swamp below.

"'Jim,' said I, 'that's a wolf, sure's the world. I don't know but that we'd have done better to have stayed at Mr. Belcher's.'"

"Come on," he returned. "Who's going to be afraid of a wolf? They never attack anything unless there's a gang together, and we'll be home before they get congregated. We're most half way home now."

"A few moments later the same dismal howl rang mournfully through the thick forest again.

"And this time an answering howl came up from the valley on the other side.

"Another moment and then a prolonged echo resounded behind us, and then another, and another, from the glen away beyond the swamp.

"A cold shudder ran through my quivering frame, and my panting breath seemed to come in fitful gasps.

"What would become of us?"

"We would be devoured by the wolves.

"Father, alarmed by our absence, would come to find us, and they would kill him, too.

"And mother and sister would mourn and starve and die alone in the wilderness.

"And it would all be on account of our wicked disobedience.

"The thought was withering, and it racked my very soul with mental agony.

"James snatched the venison from my arms, and we fled, like frightened deer, down the hill.

"As we neared the low ground the somber hemlocks shut out the little lingering light of day, and we could just discern the road.

"Louder and more fierce became the blood-curdling howls, as the cruel beasts gathered nearer about us, and we began to realize that a terrible moment was approaching.

"Suddenly a dark, tawny object dashed across the road directly before us.

"The dried twigs snapped, and the bushes rustled as it leaped to one side and sent forth a quick, hoarse growl, causing us to quake with terror.

"James threw down the venison, and, grasping

me hand, we sped along the road with all our might.

"A moment later such a commingled snarling and howling arose as I hope I may never hear again.

"They were fighting over the venison, and, now, if we would save our lives, we must do our utmost to escape during the few moments they would be engaged in devouring it.

"But ere we had proceeded a hundred rods they were coming again in swift pursuit.

"We were now running up hill, and we soon became so tired it seemed as though we must drop from exhaustion.

"Panting for breath, we staggered on.

"It seemed as though we should never get to the summit.

"We broke over the height at last, however, and as we commenced to descend, a bright light glimmered through the forest, like a brilliant lone star in the darkness.

"To us it was, indeed, a star of joy.

"It was the light from our own cabin windows, in the quiet little valley below.

"It raised in our desponding breasts a new ray of hope, and we darted on with renewed energy.

"The blinding snow dashed in our faces, and winter's frozen blast roared through the naked forest like a hurricane.

"The wolves were now close upon us again, and in a moment we might feel their sharp fangs pierce our flesh.

"We felt sure if we could reach the clearing they would pause in their pursuit, and then we should escape.

"By turning into a rough by-path, we could reach a corner of it within thirty or forty rods from where we were.

"It was the nearest point; though to reach it we would be obliged to cross a deep, rocky gully, through which ran a small turbulent stream of water.

"We did not stop to argue, but dashed down the steep decline, regardless of hurts and bruises, and soon reached the creek.

"As we scrambled up the opposite bank, we heard three or four of the savage brutes crossing the creek behind us, and by the time we had reached the top they were upon us.

"James hurriedly drew off his coat, and threw it down into the gulch.

"My goodness! What a fearful noise ensued, as they leaped upon the tattered garment and tore it to shreds.

"But it occupied their attention only for a moment, and then they came on again.

"We threw our hats behind us, but they did not stop them at all.

"A huge gray wolf, uttering an angry snarl, leaped over my shoulder, his sharp teeth snapping close to my ear as he went past.

The next moment he leaped to one side, snapping savagely at my legs, and fastening upon my coat, tore off the skirts in an instant.

"James screamed with pain as another leaped past him, biting his hand as he went, and at the same instant I received a sharp bite on my leg.

"Suddenly there came a blinding flash, almost directly in our faces, and the stunning report of the old continental musket awoke the echoes of the gloomy forest.

"Father had come to the rescue.

"The sound of the musket, at that moment, was more joyful to our ears than the sweetest strains of music.

"The wolves vanished from before us as if by magic, and their loud, unearthly yells immediately ceased.

"Run, boys, run for your lives,' father called out in a clear tone of voice. 'They will certainly kill you if they overtake you.'

"Aye; we knew it, and we bounded forward.

"As we entered the clearing our courage rose, and we flitted past past the blackened stumps with the speed of the frightened fawn.

"We could hear the furious animals collecting; again on the edge of the clearing, and we knew we could not trust them.

"Dashing up to the house, we excitedly called out between our panting breath:

"Open the door, mother!"

"The door swung back on its wooden hinges, and we staggered in and sank upon the floor before the hearth, bleeding and exhausted.

"Father followed close behind us, and raising us to our feet, kindly inquired if we were badly hurt.

"Our wounds were not serious, and after they had been carefully dressed, and we had become somewhat rested, supper was prepared.

"We sat around the board, but we did not eat anything that night.

"Our systems had been too much shocked by the ordeal we had passed through, and we had no appetite.

"Father had been to the saw-mill after we went away, and did not come home until dark.

"He heard the wolves as he came home, and on ascertaining that we had not arrived, he rightly guessed what they were making such a din about.

"Without saying a word to further excite mother's fears, he snatched his gun from the hooks and rushed forth to meet us.

"The result is already known.

"All night long the storm raged with unabated fury, and the wolves howled and snarled incessantly around the edge of the clearing, and even at times came around the house and barn.

"Old Tige would start up from his corner every now and then, rattling his chain and growling, and all thoughts of sleep was banished from the household.

"The morning at length dawned, clear and beautiful, and with the rising of the sun all cause of alarm passed away; though it was nearly a week before we recovered sufficiently to be able to go into the woods again to work.

"Father did not say a word to us about our disobedience then, but the wolves had taught us a bitter lesson, and one long to be remembered.

"We had tasted the retributive fruits of disobedience, and from that hour we were more careful to obey a kind father's commands."

"Mabel always said she would never marry any but a professional man." "And has she fulfilled her desire?" "Yes; her husband is Professor Thiddleton. He has an educated goat and a trained monkey that he exhibits on the stage."

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ITEMS OF INTEREST

CONSCIENCE TROUBLED HER.

Because she "cheated" the weighing machine in the Union Pacific Depot, Junction City, Kan., out of a penny more than a year ago, the conscience of an Abilene woman has been bothering her ever since, according to a letter received by G. W. Mills, the company's agent here. In her letter the woman stated that more than a year ago she and her daughter placed a penny in the weighing machine, and after it had registred her weight, and before she stepped from the machine, the mother stepped on also and was weighed free. This worried her so much that she inclosed a stamp in the letter and asked Mr. Mills to place a penny in the weighing machine, thus easing her conscience.

A WONDERFUL CAVE.

One of the most wonderful caves in the world is in eastern Kentucky. Unexplored and almost unknown, its grandeur has been seen by few. The cave is in the foothills of the Cumberland Mountains, on the line of the Fort Creek headquarters. Two or three exploring parties have ventured into the maze of the vast subterranean passageways, but none has ever reached the end. The searchers report passageways, rooms and chambers innumerable, and transparent stalactitic columns of great beauty. One room has a floor as level and as smooth as a dance hall. Others have fathomless pits. Evidently human beings have visited the cave before only to lose their lives trying to find their way out, for old kettles, parts of dishes, rotted lanterns and other utensils were discovered. The cave will be penetrated farther by exploring parties.

A PARADISE FOR ANIMALS.

Pierre Loti, in his book on India, repeatedly describes the fearlessness of animals in that country. He says: "My room was never closed, neither during the day nor the night, and the birds of the air made their home with me; sparrows walked on the mats that covered the floor, without even heeding my presence, and little squirrels, after an inquiring gaze, came in too, and ran over the furniture, and one morning I saw the crows perched on the corner of my mosquito net."

Describing the enchanted wood of Oodeypore, with wild boars, monkeys, and a number of birds, flights of turtle-doves, and droves of parrots, he says: "Flocks of superb peacocks strut up and down among the dead trees, running with outstretched tails, the wonderous sheen of which looks like a spirit of green and incandescent metal. All these animals are free and unrestrained, yet their demeanor is not that of wild animals and birds, for in these lands, where they are never slain by man, the idea of flight does not animate them as it does at home."

This respect for animal life is not confined to the Buddhists of Jains, the sentiment is of much more ancient origin. Pierre Loti tells us that the horrors of death and slaughter, the sickening display of carcasses of animals are nowhere to be seen, for the people of Brahma do not eat anything that has ever lived. "In the place of such exhibitions, we see heaps of roses plucked from their stems, which are used in the making of essences, or simply to be woven into necklaces."

LAUGHS

A well-dressed woman paused in front of the chestnut vender's stand. "Are they wormy?" she asked. "No, ma'am," he answered, blandly. "Did you want them with worms?"

The Lady—How much milk does the old cow give a day, Tom? Tom—About eight quarts, ma'am. The Lady—And how much of that do you sell? Tom—About twelve quarts, ma'am.

Mrs. Proudman—Our Willy got "meritorious commendation" at school last week. Mrs. O'Bull—Well, well! Ain't it awful the number of strange diseases that's ketched by school children?

"The count has promised that he will never beat or kick me if I will marry him," said the beautiful heiress. "But has he promised to work for you?" her father asked. "Oh, papa, don't be unreasonable."

Mrs. Jones—Fancy! Mrs. Bangs threw a saucepan at her husband because he sat on her new hat. I could never do a thing like that. Mr. Jones—Ah, no! Because you love me so dearly, eh, pet? Mrs. Jones—Y-es. Besides, I haven't a new hat!

"See here, Mr. Casey," said Pat to the tax assessor, "shore and ye know the goat isn't worth \$8." "Oi'm sorry," responded Casey, "but that is the law," and producing a book, he read the following passage: "All property abutting on Front street should be taxed at the rate of \$3 per foot."

"Algernon is very interesting," said the stock broker's daughter. "What does he talk about?" inquired her father. "Why, he's ever so well posted in Shakespearean quotations. "Young woman," said the financier, sterner, "don't you let him deceive you. There ain't no such stock on the market."

ITEMS OF GENERAL INTEREST

HIGHEST MOUNTAIN IN ENGLAND FOR SALE.

Who wants, to buy Mount Snowdon, which is the highest mountain in the British Isles? It is now listed for sale by its owner, Sir Richard Williams Bulkeley. Sir Rickard is probably the largest land owner in Wales.

BIG RATTLESNAKE KILLED.

Lewis H. Weed, game protector of Walker Valley, has killed a rattlesnake at Glenspey, Sullivan county, N. Y., measuring four feet and four inches, with thirteen rattles. Inside the rattler was found a chipmunk.

Old residents say this is the largest rattler killed in Sullivan county in fifteen years.

REMEMBERED IN HIS WILL.

Robert Smith, a Boston fish-peddler, when a schoolboy in Dublin, Ireland, thirty years ago, committed Hamlet's soliloquy to memory and recited it for his uncle. The latter was so well pleased that he told the lad he would remember him in his will. The uncle died a few days ago, and advices just received by Smith indicate that he is heir to an estate valued at \$200,000. On receipt of the news Mr. Smith dumped his fish cart over the edge of the "T" wharf and announced that he would leave on the first train for San Francisco, where his sister resides. He will share his legacy with her.

INDIANS GO TO SEA IN CANOE.

Newell Tomah and Johnnie Ranco of the Penobscot tribe of Indians left the reservation at Indian Island, twelve miles up the river from Bangor, Monday, June 8, on their 300-mile voyage in a birch canoe to Plymouth, Mass., to take part in the Pilgrim Tercentenary. Their departure was made the occasion of a great demonstration. Gov. Nicholas Soloman and other officials of the tribe, with hundreds of braves and squaws in native costume, and the Indian Island brass band, joining in the ceremonies.

The voyagers made a quick run to Bangor, carrying around six falls, and after an exhibition of fancy and fast paddling in the river proceeded on their way to sea. They expected to clear Penobscot Bay June 8, and if good weather holds to reach Plymouth within a week. They will hug the coast closely, making harbor every night. They go in full regalia of buckskin, beads, paint and feathers.

FIRST U. S. SOLDIERS KILLED IN WAR NAMED.

A statement authorized by the War Department to-day announces that the first American soldiers killed in battle during the World War met their fate Nov. 3, 1917. They were Corp. James B. Gresham, Evansville, Ind.; Private Thomas F. Enright, Pittsburgh, Pa., and Private Merle D. Hay, Glidden, Ia., all of Company F, 16th Infantry, 1st Division.

Articles which have been published concerning

the first Americans killed in the war have not agreed as to the time, place or identity of the men. Neither has there been agreement as to the date on which the first American troops entered the fighting line.

On a monument erected at Bathlemont, Lorraine, by the people of the Department of Meurthe-et-Moselle, is an inscription containing the names of the three soldiers mentioned above, and states they "were killed in view of the enemy on the 3d of November, 1917."

The War Department records show that the first division of the A. E. F. entered the line in the Somerville sector in Lorraine on the night of Oct. 21, 1917.

A CAT'S RIDE.

If any one doubts that cats have nine lives, he will no longer do so after reading what happened to a Huntington, Neb., kitten. The story is vouched for by reliable witnesses and told by the *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*. A kitten at the Great Northern Mills climbed into the inside rim of the big flywheel and fell asleep. The engineer did not notice the kitten when he started the engine in the morning, and for nine consecutive hours the little creature, held in its perilous position by centrifugal force, was whirled around and around on the giant flywheel at the rate of 90 revolutions a minute. It was still alive when evening came and the engine was stopped for the night. The kitten traversed the circumference of the wheel 48,600 times at lightning speed. Although alive, the kitten was in a stunned condition and was unable to stand on its feet, but a little nursing on the part of the millmen revived it, and it is now as well as ever.

POLAR SHIP LAUNCHED.

The schooner Bowdoin, built to carry Donald B. MacMillan, the explorer, on the next Arctic voyage starting in July, was launched at noon April 9 from the shipyard of Hogdon Brothers, East Boothbay, Me. She was christened with roses by Miss May Fogg of Freeport, a niece of the explorer.

In design and construction the Bowdoin embodies all elements of special provisions for the work ahead of her suggested by the long experience of MacMillan. Her hull is egg-shaped, with nothing to which ice can cling. Under sufficient pressure from the icefloes the Bowdoin, instead of being crushed, should lift out of the water and be carried along with the pack.

The Bowdoin is 80 feet 10 inches in length; 19 feet 7 inches beam and 9 feet 6 inches draught, with a total displacement of 115 tons. She is of the knockabout auxiliary schooner type, equipped with a 45 horse power crude oil burning engine.

The expedition is planned to cover two years, but may be prolonged. MacMillan's plans include also either a return by the strait or the circumnavigation of Baffin Land after exploring a stretch of 1,000 miles of its western shore, on which it is believed no white man has ever set foot.

ITEMS OF GENERAL INTEREST

DROVE WEASEL OUT OF TREE.

As Calvin Waldron and friends were walking along the mountainside at Conyngham, Pa., they spied a full-grown weasel up a tree. While two of them threw stones at the animal Waldron stood guard at the bottom, and when the weasel came down he captured it alive.

15,000 BARRELS OF POTATOES USED AS FERTILIZER IN MAINE.

Farmers in Southern Aroostook County, Maine, recently dumped approximately 45,000 barrels of potatoes in their fields, where they will be plowed in to serve as fertilizer.

Aroostook producers were caught with a large surplus as a result of a falling market, which reduced the price from \$3 a barrel early in the season to 40 cents a barrel to-day. In the northern part of the county starch factories took care of the surplus.

FLATIRON BUILDING ONLY A NICKNAME.

Ask a New Yorker where the Flatiron Building is and he will readily tell you. Thousands of persons who have never been to New York also know the building well by reputation. But inquire about the Fuller Building and there are few in the city able to locate it. They are one and the same.

On account of its peculiar shape the structure was popularly called the Flatiron Building when it was put up and it became nationally known under that name.

ART OF TATTOOING STILL SURVIVES.

Tattooing, that very apparent means of proclaiming one's love for the briny deep, is a form of adornment ancient, and in ancient times most honorable. The Polynesians are known to have been adepts in the art, and from that time to this there have been always been people who have been attracted to this form of beauty, which assuredly is only skin deep. The decorations have taken all sorts of forms, from the plain black and white work to that in the most variegated colorings, to say nothing of the method of "gash" tat-

tooing, which consists of cutting deep gashes in the desired design, filling them with clay and then letting them remain as a sort of cameo on the flesh.

Local mariners who believe that tattooing is a sign of having visited the countries wherein it is most generally practiced may be surprised to learn that right here in the center of the banking, industrial and commercial world one may be tattooed to his heart's content. In addition he may smell the salt water and the strange fruits and spices from many a foreign land. Coenties Slip, New York, street with the romantic name, boasts a barber shop which has in attendance an expert tattooer.

GRASSHOPPERS IN ICE.

Standing in Daisy Pass the traveler is at the threshold of some of the most interesting wonderlands of the Beartooth, writes A. H. Cerhart in the *American Forestry Magazine* in an article on "The Land of the Beartooth." Perhaps the most curious glacier in the world is found here. Indeed it can claim distinction on its unique feature which would make it is unusual scenic value among many glaciers.

It is the Grasshopper Glacier and in its ice it carries thousands of grasshoppers preserved in freezing condition for many, many years and of a species that are now extinct.

The grasshoppers that have been preserved in this curious manner are of a species that were migratory in habit. It is believed that centuries ago, before white men came to this continent, a vast horde of these insects were bying over the mountains at a high altitude when they encountered a severely cold air current.

The low temperature killed the grasshoppers or drove them to an alighting place and they were caught in the ice and snow of the glacier. The glacier with three smaller ones lies in a huge semicircle extending from the north and east edge of Sawtooth Peak to Granite Peak, making a continuous stretch of ice over three miles in length. The best time to visit the glacier is late in August.

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FOUND BURIED MONEY.

Mrs. Daniel Loy, a widow, in Eaton, O., near Richmond, Ind., is \$1,600 richer through the curiosity of Mrs. A. L. Harris, wife of a former Governor of Ohio. Mrs. Harris, a neighbor, entered the Loy cellar to get an article of food for Mrs. Loy, who is ill. Buried under a mass of rubbish she found several fruit jars filled with \$1,600 in currency.

"VENICE OF SOUTH SEAS" SHOWS IMPOSING RUINS

Having discovered ruins on the Nomatol Peninsula of Ponape Island (one of the Caroline group seized by Japan early in the war) indicating that there was a Japanese settlement several centuries ago, an expedition of Japanese scientists and public officials returned recently to Tokio.

"The ruins of Nomatol," one of its members reports were employed to erect the gigantic buildings at a time when no other houses were built of stone within a radius of several hundred miles.

"As the natives there live in miserable bamboo huts, the large and imposing ruins show that people of a different race lived there in the past.

The ruined walls are six feet thick and twenty feet high. The front walls are made of very large volcanic rocks. The ruins are about 1,000 feet long and 100 feet wide. The ground within the walls, where formerly gardens and courtyards were, is now covered with seawater."

The ruins are called "Venice of the South Seas."

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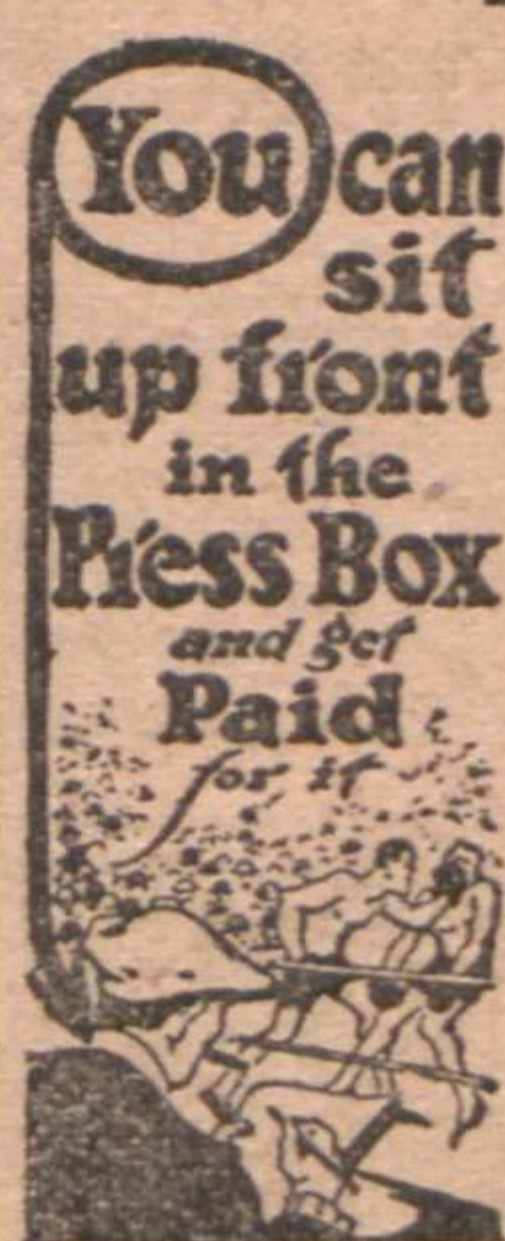
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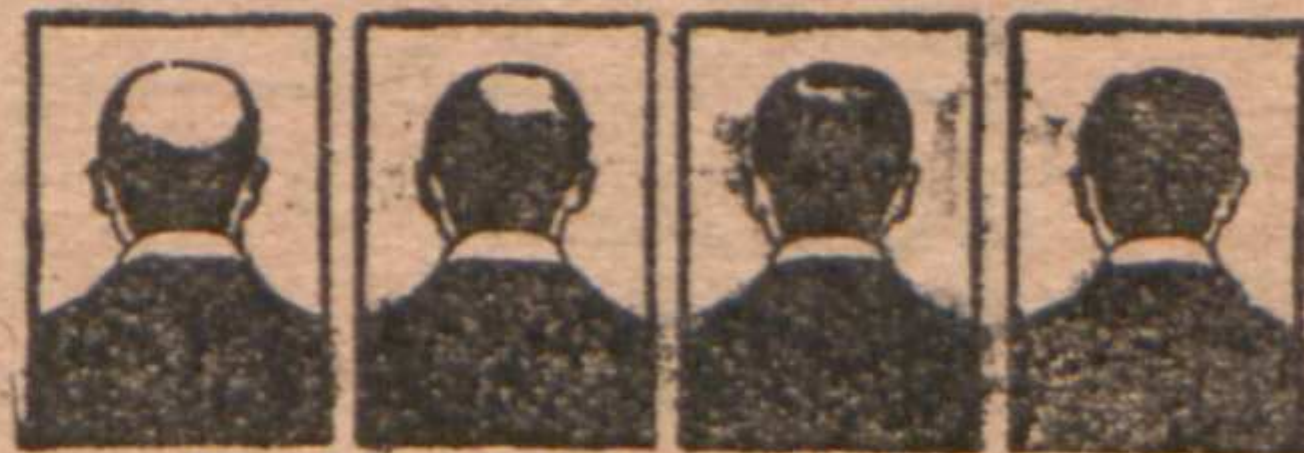
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A SEA MYSTERY

Wreckage of a large sailing vessel, together with remnants of women's clothing not more than a year old, lie on the island of Secorro, 400 miles west of Manzanillo, according to Capt. R. E. Voeth, who has arrived at San Francisco aboard the steamer *San Juan*. Captain Voeth, who is returning from a two months' cruise among the islands off the Mexican coast, told of finding the wreck while searching for fresh water. Unmistakable signs showed that survivors had lived there for a time, he said, rude shelters having been erected and holes dug in the sand in an effort to find water.

There is no water on Secorro, Capt. Voeth declared. Pieces of clothing and a woman's shoe were in one of the shelters, he said, but of the survivors he could find no trace. On the other side of the island was a ship's lifeboat bearing the word "Polar," the boat apparently having been on the beach longer than the wreck. Capt. Voeth stated that he could find no record made by either American or Mexican authorities of any vessel having been lost recently in those waters or of any shipwrecked persons having been picked up.

New Hair Growth After BALDNESS

On legal affidavit, John Hart Brittain, business man, certified to this: "My head at the top and back was absolutely bald. The scalp was shiny. An expert said that he thought the hair roots were extinct, and there was no hope of my ever having a new hair growth. Yet now, at an age over 66, I have a luxuriant growth of soft, strong, lustrous hair! No trace of baldness. The pictures shown here are from my photographs." Mr. Brittain certified further:

INDIAN'S SECRET OF HAIR GROWTH

"At a time when I had become discouraged at trying various hair lotions, tonics, specialists' treatments, etc., I came across, in my travels, a Cherokee Indian 'medicine man' who had an elixir that he asseverated would grow my hair. Although I had but little faith, I gave it a trial. To my amazement a light fuzz soon appeared. It developed, day by day, into a healthy growth, and ere long my hair was as prolific as in my youthful days.

That I was astonished and happy is expressing my state of mind mildly. Obviously, the hair roots had not been dead, but were dormant in the scalp, awaiting the fertilizing potency of the mysterious pomade. I negotiated for and came into possession of the principle for preparing this mysterious elixir, now called Kotalko, and later had the recipe put into practical form by a chemist.

That my own hair growth was permanent has been amply proved."



Photo when bald.



After hair growth

How YOU May Grow YOUR Hair

It has been proved in very many cases that hair roots did not die even when the hair fell out through dandruff, fever, alopecia areata or certain other hair or scalp disorders. Miss A. D. Otto reports: "About 8 years ago my hair began to fall out until my scalp in spots was almost entirely bald. I used everything that was recommended but was always disappointed until at last I came across Kotalko. My bald spots are being covered now; the growth is already about three inches." G. W. Mitchell reports: "I had spots completely bald, over which hair is now growing since I used Kotalko." Mrs. Matilda Maxwell reports: "The whole front of my head was as bald

KOTALKO

FOR FALLING HAIR
BALDNESS, DANDRUFF

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Busy Drug Stores

as the palm of my hand for about 15 years. Since using Kotalko, hair is growing all over the place that was bald." Many more splendid, convincing reports from satisfied users,



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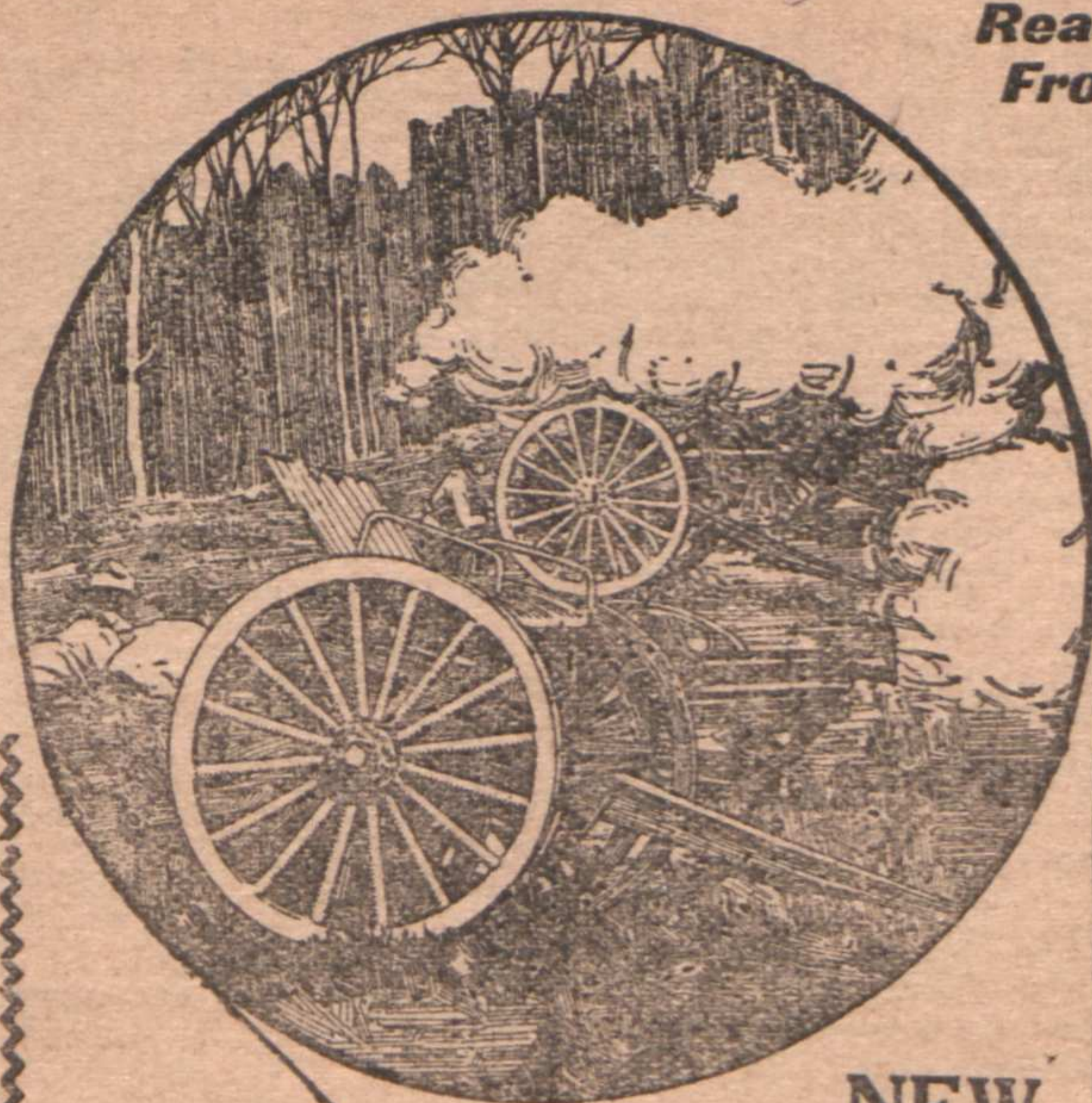


Kotalko is wonderful
for women's hair.

WHAT TO DO WHEN A SNAKE BITES YOU

Immediately after a person has been bitten by a poisonous snake, writes Dr. C. C. Graves, who has practised medicine in the tropics for many years, in the Indianapolis Medical Journal, the bitten limb should be surrounded by a tightly drawn bandage or handkerchief, as close to the bite as possible and between the trunk and the wound. The wound made by the fangs of the snake should then be freely incised with a knife and sucked. There is no danger in sucking the wound if there are no cracks or sores in the mouth or on the tongue. Do not cauterize the wounds. Do not administer alcohol in any form or ammonia internally.

The bitten person should now be removed to the nearest hospital and given anti-venomous serum. This serum is a scientifically proved remedy, and to be effective must be used early, say within the first few hours after being bitten. It is the endeavor to keep a supply of this specific serum in each hospital so that all bitten persons may receive proper treatment.



A Real Moving Picture Show in Your Own Home

Remember, this is a Genuine Moving Picture Machine and the motion pictures are clear, sharp and distinct.

The Moving Picture Machine is finely constructed, and carefully put together by skilled workmen. It is made of Russian Metal, has a beautiful finish, and is operated by a finely constructed mechanism, consisting of an eight wheel movement, etc. The projecting lenses are carefully ground and adjusted, triple polished, standard double extra reflector, throwing a ray of light many feet, and enlarging the picture on the screen up to three or four feet in area.

It is not a toy; it is a solidly constructed and durable Moving Picture Machine. The mechanism is exceedingly simple and is readily operated by the most inexperienced. The pictures shown by this marvelous Moving Picture Machine are not the common, crude and lifeless Magic Lantern variety, but are life-like photographic reproductions of actual scenes, places and people, which never tire its audiences. This Moving Picture Machine has caused a rousing enthusiasm wherever it is used.

This Moving Picture Machine which I want to send you FREE, gives clear and life-like Moving Pictures as are shown at any regular Moving Picture show. It flashes moving pictures on the sheet before you. This Machine and Box of Film are FREE—absolutely free to every boy in this land who wants to write for an Outfit, free to girls and free to older people. Read MY OFFER below, which shows you how to get this Marvelous Machine.

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HERE IS what you are to do in order to get this amazing Moving Picture Machine and the real Moving Pictures: Send your name and address—that is all. Write name and address very plainly. Mail to-day. As soon as I receive it I will mail you 20 of the most beautiful premium pictures you ever saw—all brilliant and shimmering colors. These pictures are printed in many colors and among the titles are such subjects as "Betsy Ross Making the First American Flag"—"Washington at Home"—"Battle of Lake Erie," etc. I want you to distribute these premium pictures on a special 40-cent offer among the people you know. When you have distributed the 20 premium pictures on my liberal offer you will have collected \$8.00. Send the \$8.00. to me and I will immediately send you FREE the Moving Picture Machine with complete Outfit and the Box of Film.

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I have been very slow in sending you an answer. I received my Moving Picture Machine a few weeks ago and I think it is a dandy, and it shows the pictures clear just as you said it would. I am very proud of it. I thank you very much for it and I am glad to have it. I gave an entertainment two days after I got it. Leopold Lamontagne, 54 Summer Ave., Central Falls, R. I.

Sold His for \$10.00 and Ordered Another

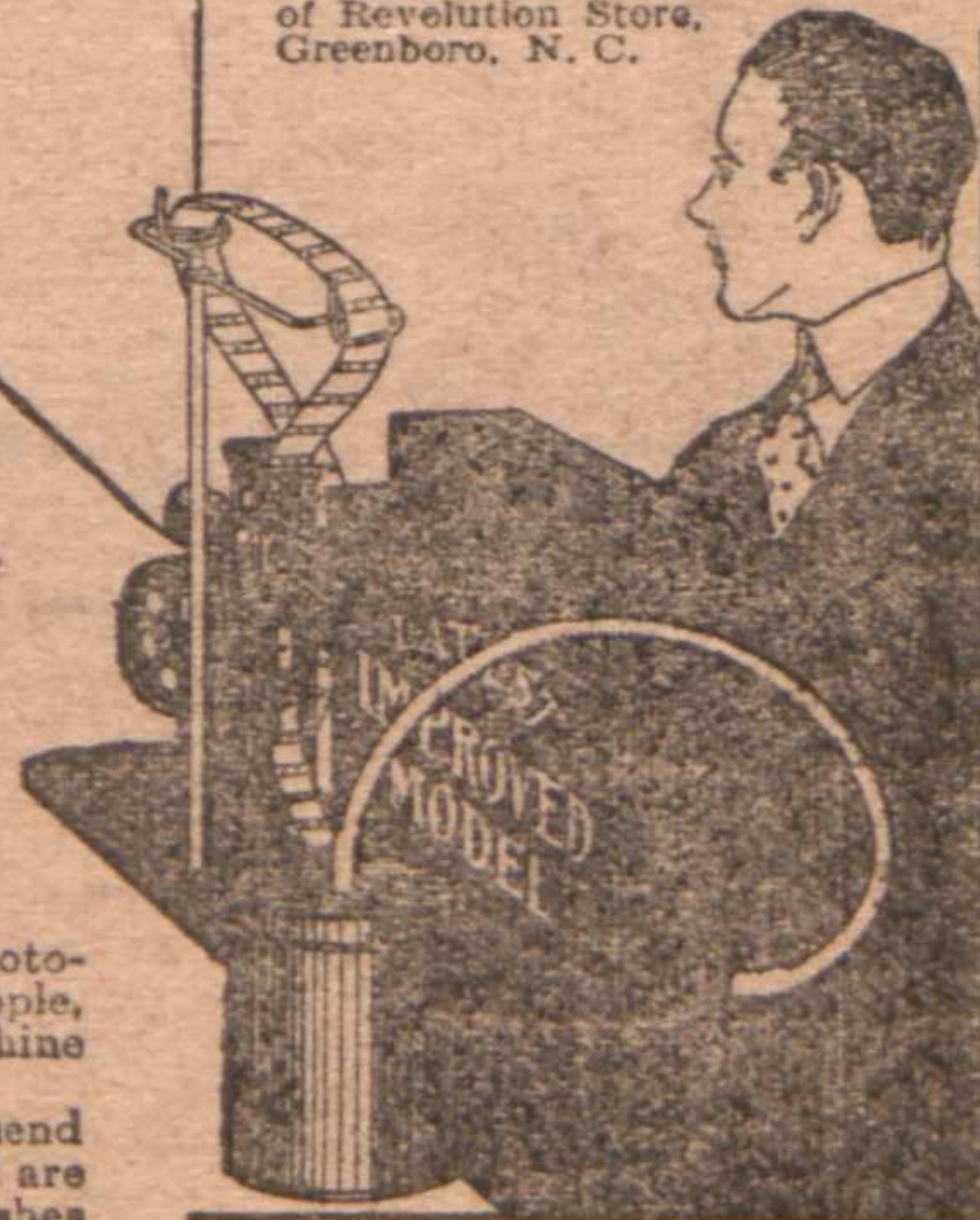
Some time ago I got one of your Machines and I am very much pleased with it. After working it for about a month I sold it for \$10.00 to a friend of mine. He has it and entertains his family nightly. I have now decided to get another one of your machines. Michael Ehereth, Maadan, N. Dak.

Would Not Give Away for \$25.00

My Moving Picture Machine is a good one and I would not give it away for \$25.00. It's the best machine I ever had and I wish everybody could have one. Addie Bresky, Jeannsville, Pa. Box 34.

Better Than a \$12.00 Machine

I am slow about turning in my thanks to you, but my Moving Picture Machine is all right. I have had it a long time and it has not been broken yet. I have seen a \$12.00 Machine but would not swap mine for it. Robert Lineberry, care of Revelation Store, Greenboro, N. C.



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